

Marie

A quarterly publication of the National Commission on Women
Vol. I No. 1
April 1989



The PDP-W:
Recognition
at last !

Celebrating Women's Month

Bea Zobel: "A Woman is not a Machine."

Lies our Mothers told us (about our bodies)

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On the cover: Women farmers from Central Luzon have something to smile about these days. With the recent approval of the Philippine Development Plan for Women, their unpaid farm work (up to 70% of the entire work load) now gets official recognition and response in government policies and planning.

Cover photo by ED GERLOCK

A WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

Never mind who really won "Musical Chairs" or "Name that Tune," the participants at the PDP-W consultations in Tagaytay clearly had a good time.

But more than just the impromptu dance marathons and the instant friendships, the women from both government – and non-governmental organizations discovered that they could cross political lines and still share common concerns for their other sisters. Alas, they also realized that often enough, sheer misinformation or the lack of it frittered away their energies and hacked away at good intentions.

The solution, it was proposed, was to keep in constant touch, to keep updating each other on plans and projects – the better to dream with and to team up.

But how? Surely the phone and the post are too quirky, and luncheon meets too fattening. Why not a newsletter then, someone suggested, and the idea quickly took shape.

First, everyone agreed, it had to come out real soon, with the fires of sisterhood still ablaze. It had to bridge both GOs and NGOs, so they could coordinate projects and share funding sources. It must be strongly flavored with service, with readers gorging on resources available to them from both GOs and NGOs. It must tackle women's issues substantially so that its audience could define themselves, their life and their future. And yet, it must also be simple and open-faced, warm and welcoming, an easy read for both men and women. There is, after all, a lot to learn and the process matters as much. Lastly, it must be accessible, a woman's best friend, her confidante, her closest sister, her dearest kumare.

Hopefully, we have just defined Marè Magazine. And, having outlined our mutual expectations, let us now work to claim this friend as our own.

Marè Magazine is a quarterly newsletter published by the National Commission on Women, with editorial offices at 1145 J.P. Laurel, San Miguel, Manila. Tel. 742-2261 and 741-7313 to 14.

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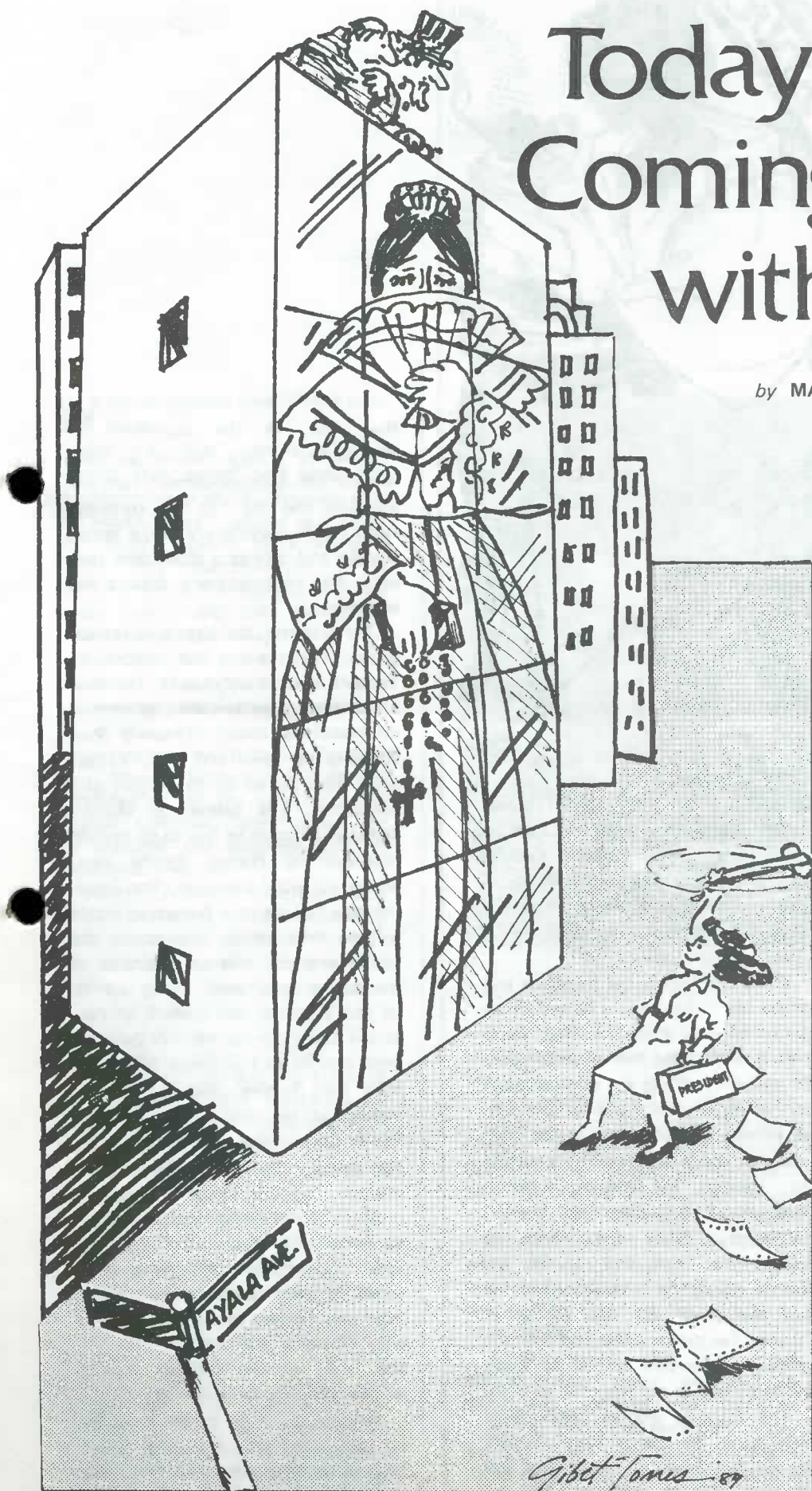
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Today's Filipina Coming to Terms with Her Past

by MARILEN DANGUILAN and MIYEN VERZOSA



The present drags along with it a litany of labels — from domestic helper to mail-order bride to Amazon — qualifiers that could make any self-respectful Filipina wince in embarrassed agony. It is after all an ignominious descent from a long and fabled past.

The Filipina remembers well her glory days as a *babaylan*, a priestess who could coax secrets from earth and sky and who synchronized village routines with the timeless cycle of nature. In prehispanic times, she had the respect of her community and was treated as an equal of man. Her influence was far-reaching as she ruled with her husband, whether over sultanates or fishing villages. In the absence of male heirs, she was given official position. Her word and judgment sustained the community as they struggled for security, health, and plain survival.

Then along came Magellan in 1521 and along with him, a new and not entirely welcome phase in the Filipino woman's history. The period marks the transformation of the feisty Filipina into a simpering shadow that she still has to outgrow today.

Baptized and christianized, she was taught to look heavenward for salvation and grace and to acknowledge earth's miseries as her natural lot. The prayle's frightening visions of hell

Sources: Carmen G. Nakpil
and Salvador Lopez



coupled with the *encomendero's* patriarchal tutelage for more than 300 years transformed the spontaneous "heathen" into the passive, puritanical and insipid Maria Clara who would rather cloister herself than confront her problems.

The turn of the century unravelled another chapter in the Filipina's colonial past. From the blonde, blue-eyed and brassy Americans, she thirstily savored her first long quaff of individual freedom after years of strait-laced Spanish upbringing. Education, formerly a hotly-contested privilege especially for women, became a social requirement, the colonizers' subtle tool for imparting their ways and manners. The same masters who would buy out an entire nation and people for \$20-million taught the reticent Filipina the value of commercial exchange. Money and its avid pursuit became a yardstick for success.

But whatever motives the Americans had behind their seeming benevolence, there emerged — in less than 27 years of the Filipina's indoctrination — 40 physicians, 53 dentists, and 562 teachers, all of them women.

Not content with professional status, the Filipino woman marched, lobbied, campaigned for, and finally won political suffrage in 1937 despite persistent discouragement and opposition from the Filipino male who argued that suffrage would lower the birth rate.

Our past then is not a collection of chronological happenstance confined to the dustbins of a certain era. Rather, it is a progressive layering, a process where values and norms

developed from one period's milieu influence and blend with those of the succeeding years. Today's Filipina then bears the indelible imprint of the Spanish *conquistadores* and the American Thomasites. It is not always a happy or harmonious mix.

While she knows her freedoms and asserts her rights, she is bound by an obedience and a loyalty that stems from a deep-seated fear of and respect for authority. While she acknowledges her faculty of reason and her intellectual power, she recognizes at the same time that she is oppressed by a culture that submits to fatalism, superstitions, sexual prejudices and bigoted stereotypes. While she wants to believe that men and women are created equal, she is conscious of the fact that they are not the same. Further, her conservative and Catholic upbringing compels her to be meek and Mary-like in her response to crisis.

The Filipino woman today must then come to terms with herself. For in her heart of hearts, she still clings to the idea of Maria Clara as

the ideal, as the equivalent of "femininity", here defined as being weak-willed, helpless, demure, reserved, inhibited and coy. The idea insinuates itself rather persistently in the female psyche and strikes a discordant note with her contemporary dreams and ambitions.

Fortunately, the past is a reliable gauge of limitations and possibilities. Today's Filipina only has to remember a rich history of heroines, of women like Gabriela Silang, Tandang Sora, Gregoria de Jesus and other *katipuneras* who risked all to be part of a revolution. The women of Malolos likewise rallied to be free to go beyond housekeeping chores despite overwhelming social pressures. The Seventies too had its own harvest of hardy women who made the slums, the streets and the hills an extension of themselves, and paid dearly for it. In the Eighties, the women of Cordillera stand out for literally shielding their culture and ancestral lands with their bare bodies, and then boldly rushing at the staff of the National Power Corporation who subsequently abandoned the Chico River dam project.

More recent images include that of students and workers rallying for social justice, teachers chaining themselves to ballot boxes, nuns offering food and flowers to soldiers, a housewife claiming the highest office in the land, women officials feasting on death threats for breakfast.

History, claim the cynics, is written by the survivors. But the future belongs to visionaries. Not surprisingly, the Filipino woman is both. ♀

PDP-W: Recognition at last!

What do women want? Freud once asked.

Had he asked today's Filipino women, they would have given him an impressive wish list. Topping that list would be such staples as a child-care support system, more equitable wages, less discriminatory hiring practices, more realistic and dignified media images, and state recognition of their unpaid farm work.

Luckily, the women did Freud one better. Not only did they answer his question; they also got together for extensive consultations, renamed their wish list *The Philippine Development Plan for Women or PDP-W*, and presented it to the country's first woman president, who moved for its approval and adoption through Executive Order 348.

Result: A heady afternoon bash at the Malacanang Palace on March 8, when the women celebrated not only the officially declared International Women's Day, but also themselves.

And with good reason. As President Corazon Aquino noted in her speech, "since (she) assumed office, (she) has appointed more and more women to high-ranking and policy-making positions... without exception, they have proven their mettle."

The President also cited the role of "invisible" Filipino women — the housewives, the ordinary women from the farms and fishing villages who contribute to the survival and well-being of the family, community and nation.

Addressing the men, Pres. Aquino cautioned them not to be threatened "by these stirrings for equality and development. The women are not anti-men, nor are they governed by the destructive spirit of competition. However, they do want to be recognized for what they are and what

Photo by ED GERLOCK



The ordinary women from the farms contribute to the survival and well-being of the family, community and nation.

they can achieve, given the necessary encouragement and support from (men)."

And apparently, from each other. Because as Executive Director Remmy Rikken of the National Commission on Women (NCW) singled out the women who contributed to the sectoral concerns of the Development Plan, the audience cheered what obviously was a productive partnership between women from government organizations and those from the NGOs.

Expounding on this, Sen. Leticia Ramos Shahani noted how "it is an uphill battle to get government to recognize the role of women in nation-building," and why it is necessary "to bring the NGOs in the mainstream of government commitment, respon-

sibility and funding."

NCW Chairperson Patricia Licuanan for her part, spoke of the common perception of equality for "the highly visible Filipino woman," but cited the more subtle discriminations against women as described in the PDP-W. Among these are: the invisibility of women's work in factories and in the farms, the double burden, the dismissal of women's issues with an exasperated, "but what *more* do you women want? and the oft-ignored issue of domestic violence.

Pres. Aquino herself deplored media's treatment of women, a Special Sectors' concern tackled by the Development Plan. Ordinary women, the President argued, "should be liberated from stereotyped roles and her options broadened to give oppor-

tunities for service and growth."

More than 500 women, Cabinet Secretaries, diplomats and other government officials attended the formal launching of the PDP-W, a companion piece of the Medium-Term Development Plan. Representatives from the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government and NGOs included NEDA Director-General Solita Monsod, Sen. Santanina Rasul, Justice Irene Cortes, Reps. Estelita Juco and Nikki Coseteng, Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina's Trinidad Domingo, and UNIFEM's Irene Santiago. UNIFEM funded the PDP-W consultations with a grant of \$25,000 "in honor of Cory Aquino."

Among the handful of males who witnessed the event, Solicitor-General Sedfrey Ordonez easily endeared himself to the women with a poem chiding Maria Clara but welcoming her feisty reborn self. The poem, which Ordonez wrote especially for the occasion, was read in both its english and tagalog versions.

Expected to guide government policies on women, the PDP-W embodies a comprehensive program of action for the advancement and development of Filipino women in the next four years, from 1989 to 1992. Its main goal is to mainstream women's concerns by integrating them in the development planning process.

A product of extensive two-year consultations among various GOs and NGOs conducted by the NCW, the PDP-W seeks to implement the Constitutional provision on women which assures that: "The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men." (Art. II, Sec. 14). It likewise substantiates the macro statement of the MTPDP which declares that: "Women, who constitute half of the nation's population, shall be effectively mobilized." International conventions and agreements such as the Forward-Looking Strategies and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also provide solid support behind the Plan's formulation.



President Corazon Aquino receives a copy of the Philippine Development Plan from NCW Chairperson Dr. Patricia Licuanan during festive launching ceremonies at Malacanang. Looking on are Comm. Gloria Aragon (left) and NEDA Director-General Solita Monsod (right). (Malacanang Photo Section.)

The PDP-W focuses on four specific sectors: *The Economic Sector* which covers Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, Environment and Natural Resources Management, Industry and Trade, Industrial Relations, and Services; *the Social Sector* which includes Education and Training, Health, Nutrition and Family Planning, Housing, and Social Welfare and Community Development; *the Special Concerns Sector* which deals with Women and Migration, Prostitution, Violence Against Women, Women and Media, and Women in Arts and Culture, and *the Infrastructure and Technology Support sector*.

The PDP-W which was adopted by the Cabinet Assistance System as one of its priority programs was unanimously approved by the mostly male Cabinet Secretaries. Both the NCW and NEDA have been assigned to monitor the Plan's implementation and to coordinate its periodic evaluation and updating.

In a way the PDP-W's development and approval parallel that of the Forward-Looking Strategies in Nairobi in 1985. Not only were both greeted with hearty approval, but the Plan's pioneering character recalls Sen. Shahani's words, "only Filipina(s) could have done it!"

Photo by ED GERLOCK.



The issue of migrant women workers and entertainers (here shown undergoing a typical screening process for accreditation at the POEA) is an issue addressed boldly by the PDP-W.

Women in G.O. Congress

Meeting for the first time to thresh out their problems as women in the civil service, some 800 women from more than 100 government agencies pressed for daycare centers in their offices, a paternity leave for male employees, and a lower retirement age.

These recommendations surfaced during the "Women in GO Congress" held at the Philippine International Convention Center last March 31.

Convened by the National Commission on Women (NCW) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Congress aims to raise the consciousness of women in government service to generate support for the improvement of their status and participation in government.

Rank and file, middle managers and top executives from government actively pursued discussions provoked by inputs on "The Situation of Women" by NCW Executive Director Remmy Rikken, "Support Services and Day Care Service," by Teresita Quintos Deles, and "The Improvement of the Legal Status of Women in Government" by CSC Commissioner Patricia Sto. Tomas.

Tackled in the afternoon workshops were areas of concern on working conditions, including hiring policies and practices, promotions, privileges and benefits, retirement and separation, as well as support facilities. Under Human Resource Development, the participants zeroed in on fellowships and study leaves. Also discussed were the grievance mechanism, participation in decision-making, and working relationships with superiors and subordinates.

The day's most significant outputs consisted of recommendations for daycare facilities within the premises, and the granting of paternity leaves for male government employees as well as to husbands of female civil servants. Other recommendations include:

- 1) The formation of women's organizations to serve as support system to victims of social and sexual harassment;

- 2) The lowering of the retirement age from 65 to 60 years old for com-

- pulsory retirement, and from 60 to 55 years old for optional retirement to ensure movement of people down the line within the bureaucracy;

- 3) Equalization of maternity leave policies and benefits (same for unmarried, regular, casual and temporary).

- 4) Institutionalization of career development plans for women in the government to prepare them for higher positions.

For its part the CSC expressed support for the women's suggestions and assured them that:

1. The Civil Service believes that there should be at least one career Undersecretary and at least 3 Career Assistant Secretaries so that there will be line

mobility for professional and career people in the government.


2. The Civil Service Commission supports the move to lower the age of retirement.
3. There will be a more systematic dissemination of information as regards training opportunities.
4. The Civil Service Commission will coordinate closely with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women to disseminate quarterly roster of vacancies to foster mobility among women across government units.
5. Existing laws prohibit payroll deductions for private entities who wish to collect loans from government personnel/staff. 

Photo by TONY REYES.



Women in government listen attentively as Pat Sto. Tomas of the Civil Service Commission expound on The Improvement of the Legal Status of Women in Government.

Celebrating **WOMEN'S MONTH**

A development plan all their own, a fiesta at Luneta, a morning of friendly sports competition, poetry, and a full day of sisterhood are just some of the gifts that Filipino women gave each other last March 8. The day marks Women's Rights and International Peace Day as declared by Proclamation No. 224, which also sets off the first week of March as Women's Week. March as Women's Role in History month has also been made official with Proclamation No. 227.

Although women from various government and non-governmental offices started meeting as early as November last year to plan out a whole month's activities, the day itself became the center of the collective celebration.

An ecumenical Mass, a photo exhibit on Filipino Women in History at nearby National Library and an array of women-made products in a mini-bazaar attracted crowds and passers-by at Luneta that morning. The afternoon saw the ladies moving on to Malacanang to witness the launching of the historic Phil. Development Plan for Women (see related story on p. 3) Then it was back to *Pista ng Kababaihan sa Luneta* with women filling up the Open-Air Auditorium to watch Inang-Laya and Susan Fernandez-Magno tackle songs about the contemporary Filipina, a *balagtas*, several dance and cultural numbers, and a skit on male-female relationships.

Foreign visitors notably the UNIFEM ladies and some Japanese women parliamentarians gamely joined in the celebration, stopping off at Malacanang and later proceeding to Luneta for an afternoon of songs and solidarity.

The merrymaking is a far cry and welcome change from the grief and lamentation one tragic day in March 78 years ago, when 175 women garment workers jumped to their death from the 18th floor of the burning

Triangle Shirt Factory in New York. The deplorable working conditions unearthed in that fire first brought women's plight into public attention. It also gave the world its first International Women's Day.

This year's celebration in the country was coordinated by the National Commission on Women, and counted participants from both government and non-government women's organizations.

a Women in History forum at the University of the Philippines, and cocktails and poetry-reading as the Forward-Looking Women (FLOW) toasted her story.

Winners of the women's month logo contest were also announced. They were Sylvia Golanco-Gascon (First Prize); Anna Marie Joy Jocelyn Santos (Second Prize); and Amihan Rebillon-Perez (Third Prize).

Other activities for the month



Feisty women. Immigration Commissioner Miriam Defensor Santiago explains why there is much to celebrate about Filipino women during the opening of Women's Month as sponsored by the Office of the Press Secretary. Obviously in agreement with her are NCW Executive Director Rommy Rikken and presidential spokesman Teddy Benigno.

Most of these organizations have their own Women's Month affair, including a tree-planting project by the Women in Ecology, a feminist monologue on "Lorena" by the Cultural Center Women's Desk, art exhibits by women artists at the De La Salle University, assertiveness-training seminars at the Phil. Women's University, a book-launching by PILIPINA-Asian Social Institute, a women's congress by the Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina,

included radio interviews on women's issues over DZBB's "Lovingly Yours Helen" morning broadcast and Radio Veritas' "Bagong Langit, Bagong Lupa" and "Professional Point."

A book exhibit at the CCP, films and videos on women, and an afternoon musical featuring the works of Filipino composers as sponsored by the National Federation of Women's Club, delighted culture buffs. For the rest, there were other sights and



Trees for Tomorrow. Staking women's claim to the future, the World Ecologists Foundation donated 120 mango and guava trees for a tree-planting ceremony at the CCP Complex. Here, sectoral representative for women Estelita Juco props up a sapling while another woman assists her.

Photo by TONY REYES

sounds to revel in, including a women's clinic by the Phil. Women's Medical Association, product exhibits by the DSWD-BWW, a tea cultural show by the ladies of the diplomatic corps and the foreign women's clubs, an international roundtable meeting on women's action for international peace, senacles on women's concerns by the Lord's Leaven Mission Foundation, a forum on the New Family Code, an annual Gawad ng Pagpapahalaga by the Metro Manila Council of Women Balikatan Movement, as well as seminars on women's health by the Institute of Social Studies and Action, the PWMA, Womanhealth Philippines, and the Civic Assembly of Women in the Philippines.

Women in government likewise took time off to talk about themselves in a Congress at the end of March (see related story on GO Congress, p.3).

Overall, this year's celebration established March as a productive and creative time for women. And who knows where we may go from here? ☺

Photo by TONY REYES



A Toast to Her Story. Music from Edru Abraham and Susan Fernandez-Magno as well as poems retell women's past and point out her future.

Photo by TONY REYES.



Sisterhood and solidarity. The whole political spectrum was represented during the Pista ng Kababaihan sa Luneta. Among those symbolically cutting the ties of women's oppression are Sr. Pilar Verzosa of Pro-Life Philippines, Pochola Villanueva of STOP, Mrs. Charito Villar of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, Dr. Leticia de Guzman of the Balikatan, Sr. Mary John Mananzan of Gabriela, Ka Menang Tolentino of Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (KBP) and Mrs. Zorayda Tamano.



1. Fun and games. Friendly competition and sports activities enabled women to flex their muscles during the Luneta fiesta.

2. Women's Health. Dr. Trinidad Gomez of the Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines discusses women's bodies and health during a forum on the subject.

3. Remember the Ladies! Filipino women reclaim their place in history during a photo exhibit on our foremothers.



4. Across Nations. Japanese parliamentarians and visitors from UNIFEM take a leisurely stroll at Luneta during the Pista rites.



5-A, B, C. Across cultures. (A.) A young Muslim woman; (B.) the Inang Laya; (C.) Gigi Duenas and KBP's Ka Gilda Agustin share their thoughts during the women's Pista sa Luneta.



Bea Zobel on Family Planning:

A WOMAN IS NOT A MACHINE!"



by RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID

1989 was barely a day old when Bea Zobel set off a controversy that is only now beginning to settle. In an article entitled, "We all need to enjoy freedom of choice," (Manila Chronicle, Jan. 1, 1989), she declared that "it is time that the Government and concerned agencies like the Department of Health and the Population Commission should realize the urgency of the family planning needs of millions of Filipino families."

It is a position that has been aired before by other women in government, the academe, NGOs and women's groups. But that is remarkable, given her social and economic stature. The Spanish-born wife of businessman Jaime Zobel de Ayala, one of the richest men in the country whose family has extensive interests in real estate, banking and finance, and manufacturing, Ms. Zobel emerged as a prominent figure in the protests that arose in the immediate aftermath of the Aquino assassination in 1983. Risking her own social position, not to say her family's business interests, she was visible in the confetti rallies and marches that culminated in the

snap presidential election campaign and the EDSA 'revolution' of 1986. Because of her closeness with then-candidate, now President Corazon Aquino, she is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as wielding influence among people in government, a perception she quickly dismisses as false.

Clearly then, Ms. Zobel was taking a big risk when she chose to speak out openly on an issue that has drawn government, Church, NGOs, the health profession, even economic planners, into furious debate. Even more astonishing, and admirable, her position on the need for greater effort to promote family planning among Filipino families was premised on personal experience. In her article, she spoke not only of her encounters with poor women burdened by large families and seeking relief, but also of her own experience, when, after bearing her fifth child, she fell into a depression.

"I had everything in life, yet I was losing weight and unable to cope with my daily duties," she wrote of that episode. "I remember sitting in front of the doctor crying. The good doctor started passing me tissue

after tissue from his box. He looked at me as though he were about to cry."

The point of the anecdote is that, recognizing her need to rest from childbearing, her doctor advised Ms. Zobel to use the pill, a decision she went along with.

"My conscience told me I was right and that my doctor was right. It was my private decision . . ."

To the dismay of women who read, understood and empathized with Ms. Zobel's article, it was this personal "confession" that commentators seized upon. A conservative male columnist made much of Ms. Zobel's social origins and wealth and accused her of being anti-children. ("How could I, with seven children!" she exclaims) and of wanting to dictate to poor women how many children they should bear.

Contributor Rina Jimenez-David sought out Ms. Zobel to probe the motivations behind her controversial statement as well as the high profile she has adopted in recent years. Interviewed in her Forbes Park home, Ms. Zobel was a willing subject whose

revelations about her transformation from a woman exclusively devoted to the care of her family to one now actively engaged in the effort to change society hold many insights from women undergoing similar transitions.

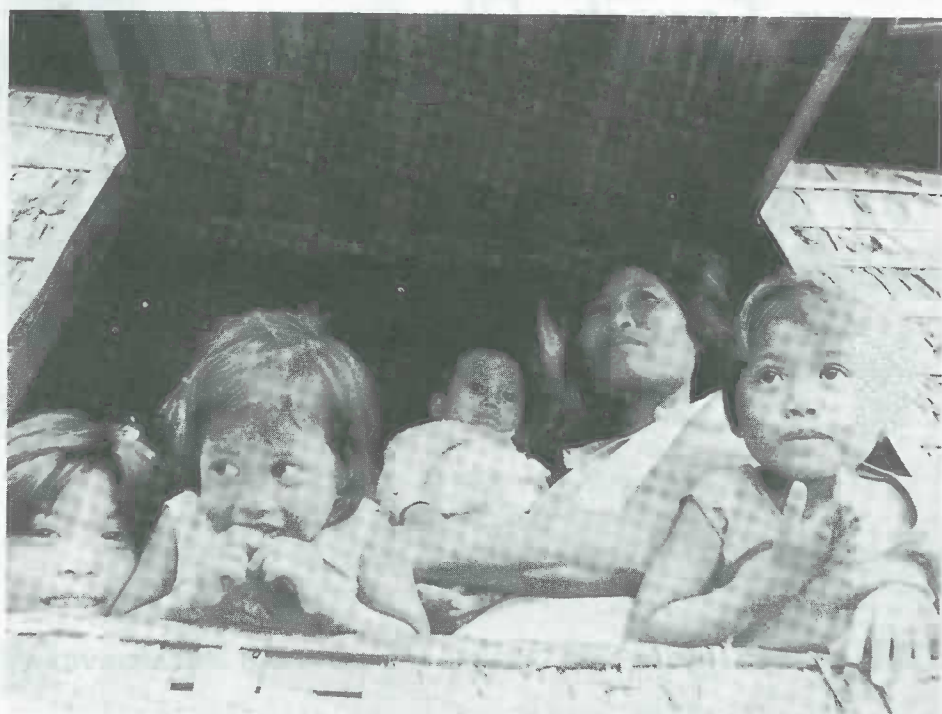
Below are excerpts from Ms. David's interview:

What prompted you to come out with that article?

For me it was really more compassion than anything else. I go around a lot because my children are already grown up. I help here and there in many places, I have my own ceramic factory where I have 120 people working, and I also go to Novaliches where work with Sr. Pilar (a Spanish Carmelite) who takes me around a lot. And in these visits, a lot of women come to me, asking me for help, because sometimes they cannot take anymore the suffering of not having enough (food) for their children to eat and they cannot cope with life. They come to me and they say, 'Mrs. Zobel, can you take me to a doctor?' Most of them ask for ligation. I personally ask them first to try the natural method, which is approved by the Church and which no doubt is the healthiest and the best. But I find that in many cases, it is not applicable.

Like for example, I just talked with a woman who told me she couldn't take life anymore. I said to her why don't you try this method, and she explained to me that it is impossible because her husband has a part-time job, he is away for several days at a time. She feels their marriage is going to suffer a lot.

On top of that, in most cases they are so poor they can't even go to church on Sunday, meaning they cannot (avail of) consultation. And when I try to explain to them the method, they cannot understand. If it is a middle-class person, let's say a teacher, she may understand very well and try to practice it. But in many cases, for our very poor people, they cannot follow (the natural



Women, who are mainly responsible for child care, often have very little choice in regulating family size.

method). Either they don't want to, or the husband is not agreeable.

The way I see it, we should give complete freedom to the women. It's good always to explain that the Church recommends this method, this Billings method, that it is natural and the best, *but* I also feel that we cannot impose it on people, in the sense that a woman should have a choice. So, the Department of Health should open their doors to help the women and offer them all these methods and let the women decide what is best for her.

Number One, not everybody is a Catholic in this country; Number Two, not all Catholics are practising Catholics, and Number Three, it is much more meritorious if you yourself decide that you want to do it this way than if you are treated like a child and told that you can use only this method and nothing else is available.

I believe the need for family planning is urgent. It is not just the mothers who are totally lacking in

vitamins and in terrible shape physically, as I see them in very poor areas, but the children are also malnourished and very often they are not well taken care of, because the mother is not capable, because she cannot cope. A woman is not a machine, she cannot keep giving birth year after year and not suffer physically and mentally. The way the women are suffering is unbelievable.

But what really pushed me to writing the article was that I had heard that US aid (for family planning) had been returned. When money is available and it is not used, I think the government has no right to do that. They could have helped a lot of women with that money. I thought that was terrible.

There were reactions to your article that said who are you, coming from a particular income bracket, to tell poor women how many children to have . . .

That is very unfair. I think that if we come out with a statement, nobody should tell us whether we have

money or no money, or what standard of education we have. I think if we make a statement, we should be respected, and they should answer according to the statement and not according to how much money we have. I thought that was very sad and uncharitable.

I don't mind people telling me that they don't agree with what I am saying, I think that is fine. But I don't think anybody should use (the fact) that I have money or any statement like that (against me). I think that's totally out of context.

You never did answer Mr. Tatad.

I think the way that he was talking was so unreasonable, there was no way I could reply to him. I think the tone of my article did not deserve that treatment. It was totally out of context.

Did you receive other reactions?

Honestly speaking, apart from Mr. Tatad and a *doctora* who wrote, the majority of the letters I received, and they were quite a few, were supportive. Even very religious people told me they sympathized with the article and agreed with my views. It was like they were just waiting for a statement like that.

I am curious though why you chose to inject such a personal account in your article.

Precisely, it was a bit difficult to do it. I felt that I had to really make an effort to confess my position, what I had done. But I also feel that many of us in the middle and upper classes who have the means to go to a doctor are acting a bit hypocritical. Most of us have availed (of artificial contraception) and I know for a fact that most of my friends, and many of the children of my friends have availed. But they are very quiet because they find this a very conflictive issue. I will never never, because I am a good Catholic, I will never confront the Church. But for me, my religion is really to help my neighbor as much as I can, to help people who are in distress and who are in need, not necessarily poor people,

there may be rich people also in need.

That happened to me. I was new in this country, I had to cope with a lot of things and I suddenly found myself on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I was very much in love with my husband and he was very good to me, he has always been very good to me, but suddenly I couldn't cope anymore. My doctor recognized this need, and though I did not put it in the article, I reacted for three years but after that I had two more children (and lost one more).

One more issue I see is that women in the provinces and in poor areas seem to be abandoned. I see them without any teeth and that is a sign of lack of vitamins. And I think that if we have a family planning program all over the country by the Department of Health, they will also look into the state of the women, give them some vitamins, have them undergo check-ups. A program that will follow women and their family planning needs will also be able to check them up, because very many of them after they have a baby, nobody checks them up.

We are not saying a woman should not have children. She may be capable of taking care of two or three, but not eight. And that is why when a woman seeks help, there should at least be a response.

There was this woman in Mindoro. I brought her to Manila because she became blind after having a baby, there was an inflammation of the optic nerve. She was cured but the doctor said you really must do something, if she has another baby, she will go blind. He inserted an IUD, but when she went back to the province, her husband objected and took up with another woman.

This time, I brought the husband to the doctor who told him, if you do not stop, you will have a blind wife who will not be able to take care of you and the children. But he refused to follow the rhythm method, saying he would leave his wife. He eventually

agreed to let his wife have a ligation, because it turns out he was scared of the IUD, he thought it was a trap!

What I'm saying is, every couple is different. They are grown up, let them decide.

Have you been formally involved in family planning activities or groups?

Actually I have offered my help to the Family Planning Commission, though they haven't asked me yet to act. I have also asked if they want me to be an NGO with the Department of Health, which I am already in Tala Leprosarium, but not for family planning.

Did anybody help you with the writing of that article?

No, I did it all alone. I asked somebody to look at it and help me with my English, because my English is not so . . . but that's all. I did not ask anybody's help, because I have a mind very much of my own. I've also written other articles before.

I don't know why suddenly I feel very strongly about some things. Like right now, I have an issue very much on my mind, and that is peace. I think that the money that is spent on the army and on bullets is very sad. I wish the soldiers could be building roads . . . I think the military budget is P22-billion (you should check that), and when I see the poor people, and I see how much they need, and when I think that they are using the money to pit Filipino against Filipino . . . I am convinced that if we wanted to, there *will* be peace.

So you are for the opening of negotiations?

I am, totally. I wish you would write that down. I think it can be done, but we *must* choose sensible people to do it. If you ask me who would I choose, I would choose only two people: Gen. de Villa on one side, and Carolina (Bobbie) Malay on the other. And there will be peace. I always see it from the point of view of poor people. The fact is, poor people continue to suffer. The fact is, we don't have money. We spend so much time

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The Town that Pigs and Bunnies Built

by OLIVE HUBILLA TRIPON

This is the house my pigs built," says a beaming Norma Almario, 38 as she shows off a two-bedroom bungalow with cement flooring, concrete walls and galvanized roofing.

Indeed, this new house is a far cry from the thatched one-room hut they used to own in San Miguel, Bulacan, 80 kms. North of Manila.

Norma was one of about a thousand housewives who joined the livelihood programs sponsored by the government and the Foundation for the Advancement of Filipino Women (FAFW), an NGO established to generate capital and economic support opportunities for women.

Her swine-fattening project has become the showcase of the United Nations Voluntary fund as it had won recognition as best rural cooperative in the Asia-Pacific Region at the World Conference of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985.

Ten years ago, the women of San Miguel did not have any livelihood

to speak of, save for a few who made candies from carabao's milk called "pastillas de leche."

In 1977, the Department of Local Government and Community Development sent its Community Organizer, Manuel Collado, who called upon household heads to a pre-cooperative meeting.

To his surprise, those who came were the women, acting as proxies for their husbands. "Why not organize the women instead?" thought Collado. He lost no time in gathering 40 women, representing different "barangays" or villages.

By year's end, with the collaboration of the indefatigable Emma Sta. Ana, 55, a native of the place and District Supervisor for the Department of Education, the "Kababaihang Barangay" (KBB), (literally, women of the village) was born.

The KBB women called on Sylvia Munoz Ordonez, then a Commissioner of the National Commission on

Women (NCW) who made sure the women of San Miguel were adopted into some of government's livelihood programs. She sent three organizers from the NCW who soon vouched for the feasibility of a swine-breeding project there.

Prior to this, a study had been completed by sociologist Carlos Fernandez, which showed that families in San Miguel had an average income of only P600 a month (30 US\$) when the average Filipino family needed P2000 (US\$100) to afford the basket of basic necessities.

Norma, whose husband works on and off as carpenter, driver and farmer recalls those difficult times: "It was like treading through water up to our noses," she said.

Knowing this, Ordonez recommended Nora and her neighbors to be the first recipients of the swine-breeding project, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The goal was to share the litter with the next batch of beneficiaries.

"The pigs really changed my life," Norma gushes. The piglet she got has given birth 16 times, averaging ten piglets per litter. Today an estimated 1000 beneficiaries are flourishing and by rural Philippine standards, are living in luxury.

In 1981, the project's success had spread far and wide, and the KBB was swamped with requests to link up more to possible funders. "We had such a long list of prospective recipients, it was impossible to accommodate all of them," said Mrs. Sta. Ana.

The project's track record, however, qualified the KBB to avail of a one million-peso self-employment assistance loan from government.

In 1983, however, a severe drought and a nation-wide outbreak of hog cholera resulted in massive piggery casualties. There were also fewer



Young stuffed toy workers at the San Miguel, Bulacan project.



UN Ambassador Phoebe Asiyo (third from right) joins the San Miguel workers as they knit their dreams into realities.

and lighter offsprings for the sows that survived, as well as spiralling costs of feeds.

The KBB and FAFW suffered heavy losses and thus decided to call off the project. They also apportioned part of the cooperative savings to pay off the one million-peso loan while the recipients paid in trickles whenever they could.

For a while it seemed like the prosperous days of pig-fattening would come to an end. Incomes were dwindling and the members feared the setback.

Sylvia Ordonez, in the meantime, had been appointed Managing Director of the government's heavily-funded Technology Resource Center (TRC), geared mainly to assist cottage industries and small-scale businesses.

"Because the women had experienced relative success, I felt they deserved a second chance," relates Ordonez as she directed the TRC to provide technical assistance and introduce the women to prospective exporters in need of labor.

"This was when the women learned the art of making project feasibility studies," says Ms. Sta. Ana.

Finally in 1985, a request for piece-meal workers landed on the Mayor's desk in San Miguel. Word spread about the possibility of earning 100-300 pesos (10-15 US\$) a week.

"When the women saw the high-class sweaters they were supposed to produce, they almost backed out," says Penny de Guzman, KBB president.

The first batch of 13 were taught

the rudiments of knitting export-quality sweaters and in no time, womenpower from a total of 13 villages were mobilized, bringing the workforce to 1000.

The same happened with a subsequent contract to make stuffed toys. However, the KBB chapter heads who took charge of quality control, were not compensated at all. "The owners actually expected unsupervised piece-meal workers to come up with impeccable work," a KBB officer complained.

Thus, the women were compelled to seek advice from the TRC once again. There, they were encouraged to venture into export directly with the possibility of acquiring a sizeable loan.

Armed now with a two million peso credit line, the KBB started operations last May 1987, with a job order of Santa Claus and Snowman dolls.

After that Christmas' shipment, the women were busy once again with Easter bunny dolls, making them today, the biggest exporter of stuffed toys, with a shipment rate of US\$150,000 worth a month.

San Miguel has not been the same since. With groups of women busy sewing, knitting, or taking care of pigs, the men know full well whereof the added luxuries come, and readily partake of the household chores and child care.

As tv antennae sprout over roofs all shiny and new, it has become apparent that the houses in San Miguel were built by pigs, or Santa Claus dolls or Easter bunnies. ☺

BEA ZOBEL

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fighting, either in politics or in the mountains, and I think the time has come when we should be able to negotiate, to talk to each other and make peace. And in my heart, I feel Cory is the person for it, I think she could do it.

I'm curious about your involvement in so many activities. How did you begin?

It began really, only after the children were all grown up. Before that, I was not really aware of how bad the situation was, with the majority of our people. I was totally concentrating on my children and my husband. I was half-asleep here in Forbes. Only lately, after the children were grown up (her youngest, ballet dancer Sofia, is 20) that I started to get involved.

I started by selling a few things from Tala Leprosarium then I put up a shop, then a carpentry shop, then little by little I started visiting San Andres (a depressed community). In Tala, I saw a lot of poverty, a lot of injustice and a lot of corruption on the part of the Marcos government. And little by little, I became involved.

Only after I began visiting with poor families in their homes did I feel I suddenly couldn't take it. And now it has become like a race to try to help them. But it's very painful, the contrast. Being with the poor, and then I come home to this house, and you have so much . . . it hurts. So it's a very difficult life. On one hand, you enjoy what you have, I cannot be a hypocrite. And on the other, you want the others to have the same as you, and more.

I am not introduced as the wife of a rich man. Very often, they don't know who I am. They call me 'sister.'

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Women's lib and all that? No, not really. I have a great respect for men. But I do realize that in the Philippines the women suffer a lot, and they very often suffer more than the men. I try to obey my husband as often as I can, honestly. Although I believe a husband should give freedom to his wife. We cannot be slaves to our husbands.

You are often perceived as being very influential with government.

That is wrong. I hardly see them. But I feel the doors of government are open to anybody with a good cause. They are very delighted when you call their attention to an issue. Like the Department of Health, when (Secretary) Alran Bengzon found out I

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THE DEBT CRISIS: An Added Burden on Women

by OLIVE HUBILLA TRIPON



Most people look at the debt issue as something too technical for them to understand. They get a mental block like it's a difficult Math problem that's too hard to solve and therefore something they cannot do anything about. The debt issue was taken up in an interview with UP Public Administration Professor and Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) Vice-President Leonor Briones. The best way to explain the debt crisis is to show its effects on the people, specially on women who carry the burden of managing household finances, the first casualty of a troubled economy.

First, the debt issue is a health issue. The delivery system of health services is hampered by the debt crisis. Women are affected *most* as mothers and recipients of health care themselves.

This year's measly health budget is only 3.2% compared to 44% or P104.4 billion that is automatically appropriated for debt service. Last year's debt service budget of P60 billion pesos (we actually paid P83 billion) could have increased the budget of the Health Department 13 times.

Forty-four percent of the barangays have no potable water. Since most diseases are water-borne, one can imagine the state of health of these communities without toilet and sewage facilities, not to mention the inadequate number of health centers and hospitals.

Prof. Briones recounted her own personal experience when she was confined in a public hospital. She had to buy her own medicines including plasters and needles for the IV. Destitute patients used ordinary tape and reused the needles, a dangerous practice, since they could not afford to buy these things. And this

does not include the number of Filipino poor, who live and die without seeing a doctor.

Second, the debt issue is an economic issue. Although the GNP grew by 6.7% the incidence of poverty, as indicated by the Social Weather Station grew by 9 to 11%.

The Freedom from Debt Coalition primer on debt shows that the Philippines owes \$28.9 billion as of May, 1988. Yearly interest and principal payments will drain around \$3.6 billion out of our country from 1987 to 1992. This means that everyday, for the next four years, we will be paying P207 million. The government could create two million new jobs this year, if it stopped payments on the debt."

The failure of the economy to provide employment to 700,000 job-seekers every year drives more and more men and women to work overseas or delve in the underground economy. It seems the women are more aggressive to work abroad as housemaids, governesses, dancers and entertainers. Many come home battered and raped, or end up as prostitutes.

As keepers of the purse strings, the burden of feeding the family from an inadequate minimum wage (P69/day) when a family of four in Metro-Manila needs P120 a day to live decently, falls on the women. Although this is really a man's responsibility, it has special effects on women because Philippine society dictates that women should see to it that the family is fed, no matter how meager their earnings. She just has to make do with whatever her husband gives. The high number of malnourished children shows the pervading poverty in the country.

Real wages cannot meet the high cost of commodities due to indirect

taxes, which go towards paying our debts. They may not file income tax returns but the poor pay more even if they buy only essentials.

To earn that extra source of income, women resort to peddling food and all sorts of products from office to office, do other families' laundry, sew dresses and curtains, etc.

In a survey done by Women's Resource and Research Center in urban poor communities, another vital function of women in the family is emerging — that of asking for loans. The men are ashamed to borrow but

squatter population in urban areas since the government could not provide the needed one million dwellings a year.

According to the National Commission on Women, one out of five households are single-headed, mostly women-headed households. A few years' stint overseas resulted in many broken homes. As sole breadwinner, a woman faces discrimination in the workplace, since a woman's job is looked upon only as a source of supplementary income. Not only is she last hired and first fired, there are also studies which show that on the ave-

women feel the impact of the debt crisis. The common reaction was anger. One woman, upon learning that the government assumed the debts of Marcos cronies, was so enraged she had to be rushed to the hospital. In radio programs, more women reacted and called by phone, Prof. Briones revealed.

What can women do? They can organize and join groups like the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) in pressuring Congress, the President and her Cabinet to make sure our leaders take a stand on the debt issue in favor of the people.

"Our government does not renege on debt but reneges on its obligations to our people," Prof. Briones said. It is not just a woman's issue. The debt crisis affects all and therefore it is a people issue.

FDC advocates a debt policy that is based on capacity to pay to make way for economic growth that will alleviate the poverty of the people. It also support pending bills to repeal automatic appropriation of debt service and to limit debt payments to 15% of export earnings. Already the President vetoed both Houses' bill to create a debt commission which will choose the negotiating panel. The Senate has decided to override the veto while the Lower House issued a six month freeze on the debate of pending bills during the IMF-World-Bank talks.

Filipino women can also network with other women of debtor countries concerned with the debt issue. A group of American women resolved to identify creditor banks in the U.S. and vowed to remove their deposits. Last year, a group of Asian women got together and compared notes about the debt crisis in their countries. These women are working with African and Latin American women involved in the debt issue.

If women can understand the debt issue because it affects them directly, organizing themselves seem to be one alternative to dramatize the issue more effectively. Ultimately, some women believe, the issue would touch another woman — the President herself. ♀

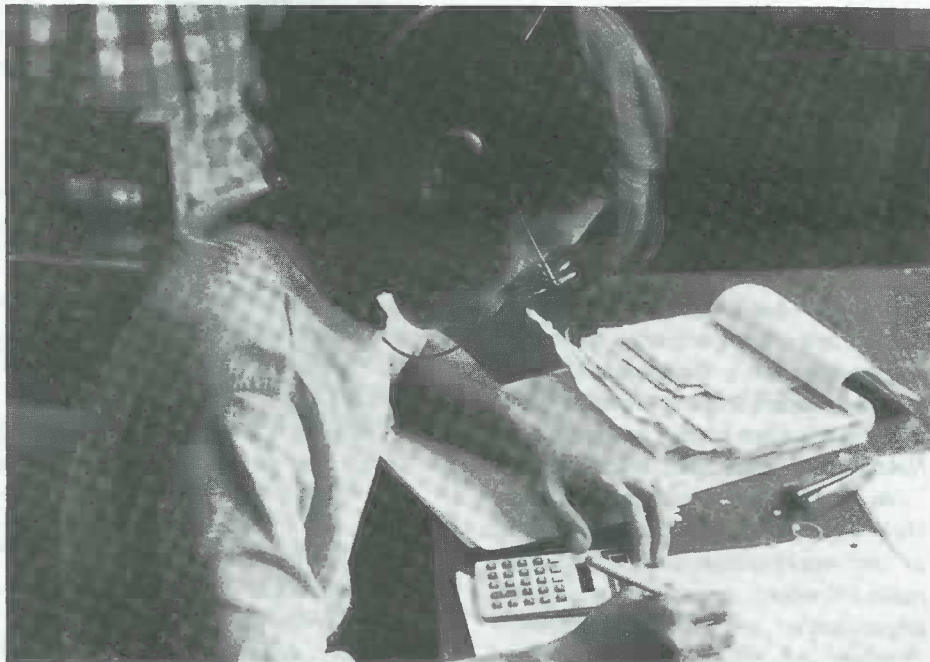


Photo by ED GERLOCK

Making both ends meet has become an increasingly difficult responsibility for many women.

the women have to swallow their pride just to have the bare necessities.

Third, the debt issue is a social issue. For women who could not go to work abroad or do not have the skills nor the means to earn a living, prostitution is the answer. To help augment the family income, mothers are forced to send their children out in the streets to sell newspapers, cigarettes or sampaguita. Some simply beg. Some have become child prostitutes themselves.

Due to hard life in the rural areas, many families migrate to the city to find jobs. This has increased the

rage, women earn only P.34 to a man's peso.

Lastly, the debt issue is a political issue. The government, as true representatives of the people, must formulate a firm policy on debt (not a mendicant approach) and laws have to be passed regarding these policies.

Prof. Briones, in her many speaking engagements all over the country, noticed that women understand the debt crisis right away. They easily recognize the relationship of debt and the state of poor health and unemployment of the people. The

8:00 to 5:00

by RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID

Dear Helen Ate Helen



Helen Vela: hers is the familiar soothing voice over the air.

Who does not know Helen Vela, Ate Helen to you and me? Most mornings, her mellow, modulated voice reaches across the airwaves, dispensing advice and sympathy. Evenings, she anchors Channel 7's newscast in Pilipino, discarding her showbiz togs for sober anchorperson outfits. Sunday afternoons, she fills the apres lunch television void with *Lovingly Yours*, Helen, true-to-life melodrama that is capped by more of her advice-giving. Who does not know Ate Helen, indeed?

The ratings certainly tell the story. Her radio and TV shows have consistently topped the ratings lists, making her a wealthy woman, aside from being a top-notch announcer, actress and producer who packages her own shows.

When not running her one-woman entertainment conglomerate, Helen Vela is also mother to three, with only daughter Princess Punzalan currently carving out her own acting career on TV and the movies. Also, perhaps in keeping with her immersion in melodrama, Ms. Vela's life has

itself not been spared emotional twists and turns, every romantic corner she takes fully documented by the entertainment media. But that is all part of the trade, as Ate Helen, the professional, will concede.

In an interview with contributor Rina Jimenez-David, Ate Helen talks of the working day and career of a radio-TV talent, newscaster, producer, single mother and one tough woman. (Portions of this article previously appeared in *Star Weekend*, the weekend supplement of the *Philippine Star*.)

I'm on radio three hours every morning, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, live from Monday to Saturday, though I tape the show for Sunday. Monday to Friday, there's the early-evening newscast on Channel 7. On Saturdays, after the radio show until about midnight or even past it, I tape *Aguila* (an early-afternoon soap). Mondays I tape *Princess* (since replaced by a family-oriented sit-com *Family 3+ 1*), Tuesdays, the drama portion of *Lovingly Yours*, Wednesday evenings, the narration part of *Lovingly Yours*,

and then on other days there are production meetings, movie shootings, etc. Sundays I reserve for God and family.

Why do I keep such a hectic schedule? You could trace this, I guess, to my past. As a young girl I was very, very insecure. I didn't even have any dreams when I was young, all I wanted was to finish my studies. We were very poor, utter poverty, I couldn't even wear shoes to school!

Because I graduated valedictorian from high school (UST Education High), I got a scholarship in college. But I started working (in radio) in my first year and I found it very difficult to maintain my grades. So, I had to make a choice. Besides, I had work I enjoyed doing, so I decided in favor of broadcasting.

Actually, I started as a singer! Yes, I won in the monthly finals of *Student Canteen*. But I got my start in radio when my classmates (in college) egged me on to try out in the auditions then going on at DZFM and DZRM. *Katuwaan lang*. But I would say that my voice then was



My personal life has not been spared of troubles. But I think that's precisely why people continue to feel for me. I guess they see that I'm as human as they are. Bakit si Ate Helen, grabe ang problema, naka-angat pa rin? Ganoon ba.



even mellower than it is today, it's been spoiled by cigarettes, too many late nights and fatigue. Anyway, I was taken in as apprentice for six months, *without pay*. But later, when a lady announcer got pregnant and went on leave, I was made a regular.

When I moved to ABS-CBN, I was given a lot of shows, and when *Kuya Cesar* was "promoted" to DZXL, *nabakante* ang DZAQ, and they decided to make me "Ate" Helen in his place. I was just 19 then.

From where did I get all the advice I was dishing out? I guess when you have an unhappy childhood, you mature faster. Besides, most of the problems sent in were those of teenagers, people my age.

And it wasn't really advice-giving I was doing (and still do). I just give letter-senders the feeling that they have a shoulder to cry on. They have someone who listens, understands or sympathizes.

Most of those who write to me are people who are really burdened, and seek a friend. Through the years, I have been enriched. I must admit that I have learned a lot from the letter-senders. And in all my years in this trade, I have been "truly" shocked only once, by the letter of a young girl who witnessed her father committing an "unnatural" act.

My personal life has not been spared of troubles. But I think that's precisely why people continue to feel for me. I guess they see that I'm as human as they are. *Bakit si Ate Helen grabe ang problema, naka-angat pa rin? Ganoon ba.*

In 1975, I had *Lovingly Yours, Helen* on DZBB. We changed format to a radio drama in 1978, and soon after, we began *Lovingly* on television. As for ratings, on its first telecast, it rated a high 36, that's a record,

I think, for a first telecast.

I had always been active on the production side of the show, I've worked with the same production team from the very start. But I wasn't so familiar with the sales angle, the financial side. That was my apprehension when BSH (Ben S. Hernandez, former *Lovingly* producer with whom she has a son) and I split.

I was scared to death, I tell you, I didn't have that much money then. I had to depend on my personal resources. So *pagdating ng* December (of 1984), that was the loneliest and *pinakakawawang Christmas naming mag-pamilya*. I was able to recoup middle of 1985 *na. Matagal rin ang crisis*.

It was really a matter of necessity. I had to continue with my show. When the breakup came, I wanted to drop the show entirely. But I had to carry on. I was not a businesswoman, but I had a commitment to my audience, to my staff, there were people depending on the show for their monthly paychecks.

As a boss (of Hyper-Visions Productions, Inc.), I'm a softie. I have a tendency to be compassionate, though I think you have to confirm that with my staff. But sometimes I think I have to learn how to be firm.

You could say I am now financially stable and independent. Princess has been able to take care of her own finances and even helps out her brothers. I can't ask for anything more, I'm very happy and content.

To other women, I say: There is no substitute for hard work. With it go perseverance, determination, patience, *pakikisama*, a lot of *pakikisama*, not public relations but human relations, a lot of heart, a little bit of good luck . . .

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wanted to help, he let me sit in with the doctors as an NGO. I also called the attention of Secretary Factoran (of Natural Resources) about a plan of some people to do business in the Mangyan reservation in Mindoro, and he immediately said they would protect the Mangyans. Those are the only times when I approached the government.

Has your husband ever objected to any of your involvements?

On the contrary, he helps me a lot. He gives me money, lots of money, for good works. Continuously, he is paying bills, medical bills, everything. And he totally sympathizes. He just cautions me not to overdo it. Sometimes I drive him a bit crazy. He understands me already, but sometimes I can be a bit trying also. Because in the past, the attitude of business people is not to meddle in anything. He does not mind my doing charity work, but when I speak up, he has to warn me not to be controversial.

What would you say to other Filipino women?

I think the Filipino woman is fantastic, she sacrifices a lot. But I don't think we should impose undue hardships on her. And I think we are doing that now, with this family planning thing. Filipino women should also fight for their rights. If a woman wants to try family planning, she has the right to choose what method she sees fit.

Are you very different now from the woman who first came to Manila from Spain 30 years ago?

Very, very different. I became a Filipino when I married Jaime, and when I first saw the Philippines, I fell in love with it. I have learned a lot from the country, and I feel Filipinos are the best people in the world.

When I started seeing all the poverty some years ago, I would come, let's say, from Tala, and I would start crying in the middle of a dinner and make a fool of myself and nobody knew what was happening to me. It was just that I couldn't take anymore the conversation and the food. Jaime thought I was going crazy. I was suffering because in a way I was rebelling against myself. On one hand, I am not a hypocrite. I like what I have, I love playing golf, I like going on trips, I love my home, I love my garden. But then, when I am with the poor, I think, what are we doing? I help and help and help, but I think I can do much more. It's tough.

by ELLEN DIONISIO

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK AT LAST ?

Check the correct answer: Women work a) for lipstick money; b) to while away their time before marriage; c) hopefully to find a good catch in the office; d) to supplement family income, and e) all of the above.

Most employers would tick off e) *all of the above*, a perception that persists to this day despite harsh economic realities which have virtually dragged women — and even children — in the forefront of a ruthless labor market.

The logic based on this perception is that if women work only for extra income and at their leisure, then they'd be grateful for whatever pittance they could earn.

Result: Several studies have shown the wide gap between wages paid men and those paid women. For work of comparable value, one study cites that women receive only 34 centavos for every peso paid to a man. Another research claims that females earn only P1.00 for every man's P1.50.

Thankfully, such wage discrimination would most likely be dumped should two Congressional bills be approved: Sen. Leticia Shahani's Senate Bill 65 and Rep. Lorna Verano Yap's House Bill 10848. (*The bills have recently been approved.* — Ed.) Although both bills have not received as much support as Sen. Ernesto Maceda's bill on wife-beating, they address an issue that should be a cornerstone of the women's movement: equality in terms and conditions of employment.

The bills seek to buttress Article 135 of the Labor Code which states as a principle that "It shall be unlawful for any employer to discriminate against any woman with respect to terms and conditions of employment solely on account of her sex." The original Article specifically cites only one area of equity: the right to equal remuneration for work of equal value.

The bills also include guarantees to the right to equal opportunities in promotion. The final version of SB 65, approved upon third reading in May 1988, also includes equal



According to statistics, women still receive only 34 centavos for every peso earned by men in the same type of jobs.

rights in hiring as recommended by the Senate Committee on Women and Family Relations.

Meanwhile, the report of the House Committee on Labor and Employment on HB 10848 prior to second reading recommends that "training opportunities, study and scholarship grants" be specified too as equal opportunity areas. Another Committee recommendation recognizes that sex-based discrimination

can work against men too: it therefore proposed that the word *woman* be substituted with the word *employee* in the amended article.

Sex-based discrimination in these areas can make employers liable to conviction, not to mention damages claimed by the aggrieved party.

At least one coalition of women's groups, the Legislative Advocates for Women (L.A.W.), has lauded the bills as "giving teeth to an otherwise

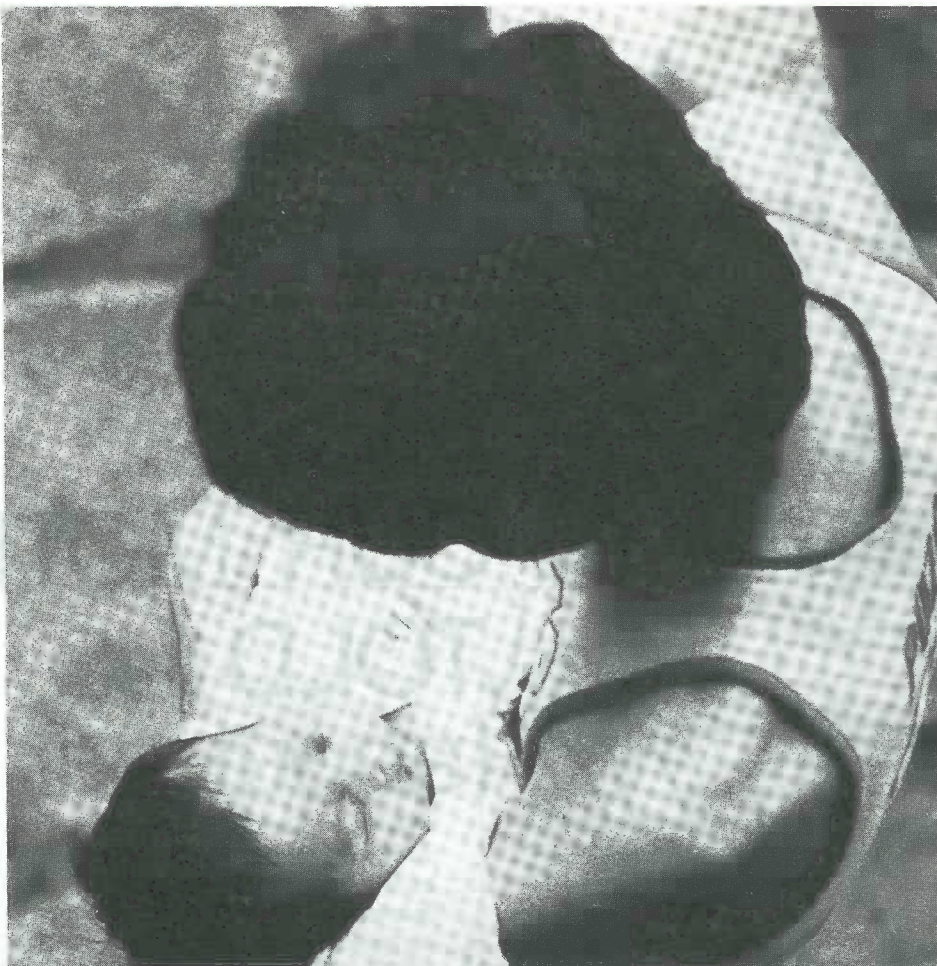
effete Article 135." But the Workers' Commission of L.A.W., which drafted the statement of support for the bills, warns that the victory may remain symbolic unless sex-based discrimination is put into larger context.

The L.A.W. statement cites less obvious yet equally virulent forms of discrimination in terms and conditions of employment. Many companies have unwritten policies of accepting only single women — a criterion that does not apply to men — or of dismissing female employees who marry or become pregnant. Women, too, are often the first to lose their jobs in cases of retrenchment. Sexual favors, more frequently demanded of women than of men, too often become a prerequisite for better pay, positions or working conditions.

L.A.W. also urges legislative action on equity issues which do not strictly fall under the category of terms and conditions of employment. Filipino women's lower average earnings (75% that of Filipino men) are due not as much to lower wages for the same type of work — though that is common enough — as to job segregation: women's relegation to jobs classified as "low-skilled." The principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" meets a dead-end here.

The garments industry is a classic example. Female sewers — and companies deliberately hire females for this type of work — labor for back-breakingly long hours, yet are paid much less than company mechanics (all male) who, in one sewer's words, "just sit around waiting for the machines to break down." The sewers, tagged as low-skilled workers, argue that they put more value into the final product than the mechanics do — but business doesn't see it that way.

Job segregation is a complicated issue, involving a string of interrelated factors: stereotypes about men's and women's capabilities, the devaluation of jobs classified as "women's work"; and women's limited access to training in skills on which society places greater value. SB 65 and HB 10848 may not be the right place to address these factors. But HB 10848 actually



More than just the pay equity bill, women lobbyists are clamoring for men's support in childcare if they are to enjoy the same career opportunities that men often take for granted.

threatens to enshrine job segregation — and outright discrimination within the same type of job — by stating its provisions do not apply where sex-differentiated terms and conditions of employment are "deemed material to the nature of the work." This lends legitimation to the unscientific and discriminatory view that certain types of work are "naturally" performed better by men or by women.

The most invisible and intractable obstacle to women's equality in employment remains the notion that women's first duty is the maintenance of the home. It is also the outmoded logic behind nearly all forms of sex-based discrimination in the workplace. The almost exclusive responsibility assigned to women by society for domestic work forces women to perform a "double-day" of work, affecting their efficiency on the job and reinforcing employers' biases against them.

L.A.W. urges the enactment of legislation to provide for the sharing of the domestic burden by the state, the employers, and men through institutional supports (e.g., day care facilities) and the re-education of

males to assume household responsibilities. The Workers' Commission of L.A.W. argues that the issue here is not simply equity, but social recognition of the indispensable contribution of household work to the maintenance and reproduction of the labor force.

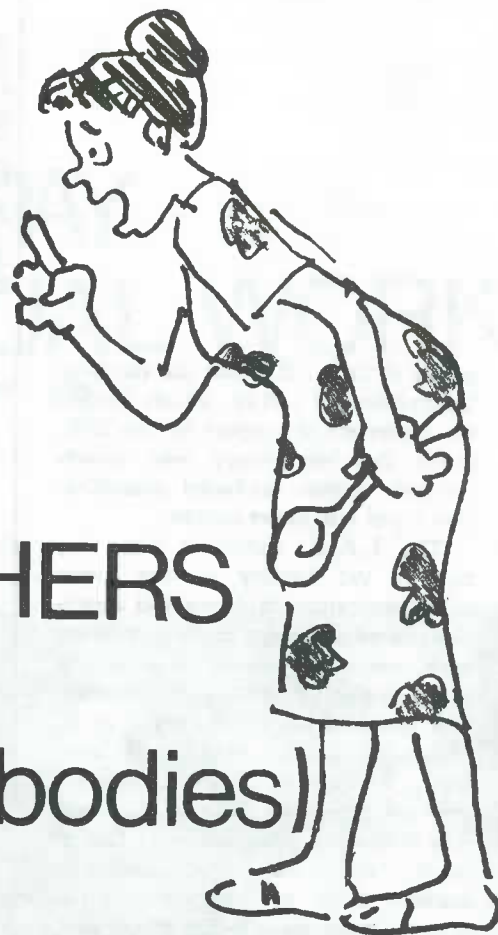
No one law, of course, can resolve another form of inequity which women share with men: the relative powerlessness of workers vis-a-vis employers. Yet this is the main reason that labor laws, however well-intentioned, are not implemented, and that employers who violate the laws can get away with it. Unfortunately, it thrives in the divisions that society creates between men and women of the working class.

Indeed, the women's movement would be naive to place its faith entirely in laws, which may merely serve to reflect or mask structural inequities. The real significance of bills such as SB 65 and HB 10848 is that they further define the areas of women's struggle — and thereby provide the women's movement and the trade unions with yet one more avenue for educating and organizing women for just social change. ♻️



by PENNIE S. AZARCON-DELA CRUZ

LIES OUR MOTHERS TOLD US (about our bodies)



You've probably heard it all before, dire warnings from well-meaning moms and grandmothers who planted the fear of God in us the first few years of our menstrual flow. Like secret or coded messages, most of the admonitions defied logic: don't take a bath or shampoo your hair lest you go crazy; don't eat anything sour or you'll get stomach cramps; don't do any exercises; jump off three steps in one leap if you want your period to last for only three days; wash your face with your first discharge if you want to avoid pimples. Unexplained admonitions usually follow: don't ride a bike, don't play with boys anymore, don't go horseback riding, don't take ballet lessons.

For a while, they went unchallenged like ancient mystical prayers that embellish a young girl's rites of passage, or a complex obstacle course on the way to adulthood. Whatever we didn't know, we invented or improvised.

One remembers hilarious ways of coping with this monthly malaise that few mothers took time out to explain beyond the crytic *basta, kasi dalaga ka na*. A classmate, for instance, thought she had an open cut down there and secretly smuggled in a bottle of mercurochrome to school. Another, apparently puzzled and disgusted over her stained under-

wear, took to dumping them every-time a stain showed. It took her exactly four hours to go through her entire wardrobe, after which she had to confess to her mom and beg her to buy her more undies.

Even naming the problem was taboo: one was "observing" and wrote this out on a piece of paper to escape a rigorous volleyball game during PE, or one had a "visitor" and had to be home early.

Just when I thought I left them all behind in the scrupulous Sixties, I met a schoolteacher, fortyish and urban-bred, in a small beauty shop. She'd like a permanent, she says, but please, don't ~~wet~~ her hair at all. She has a "visitor" she reveals and she might go mad if she didn't follow the age-old prescription.

Coincidentally, the monthly misery (as some term it) has taken on added interest to married friends who wanted to add Rhythm (and Method) to their lives. How does one control The Curse, others ask, thinking of PMS (or premenstrual syndrome) and other discomforts that herald its coming.

Can we trust our moms on this one, or are we better off looking it up in the yellow pages?

Luckily, there's Dr. Florence Macagba Tadiar, a family physician specializing on maternal and child care. Dr. Tadiar is also the Executive

Director of Whealthcare* or Women's Health Care, an NGO that offers low-cost medical services centered around women's health including family planning.

As a family doctor who's had 20 years of practice in rural areas, notably La Union, Dr. Tadiar is familiar with the above myths and misconceptions. Here, she attempts to clarify some of them:

On the bath prohibition: "This probably stems from the usual concept that menstruation is an illness where one has fever, hence one should refrain from taking a bath. But this has no scientific basis. In fact, for obvious reasons, this is one time when one should be extra-meticulous in her hygiene. Sometimes bathing twice a day is necessary to get rid of that warm and sticky feeling."

On eating sour foods: "I guess the stomach cramps connection has some basis in fact. You see, our uterus is swollen just before our menstrual flow and thus, more sensitive. The same is true with our gastro-intestinal muscles, which when irritated, go into spasms. So when we eat anything sour which is usually accompanied by salt or *bagoong*, there is the possibility that stomach irritation would follow and cause us pain. Since the uterus is also smooth muscle, it may likewise contract,

causing spasms and pain. Also it has been found out that during menstruation, there are noxious substances that may cause smooth muscles to go into spasms, including arterial spasms so that the lining of the uterine wall could be sloughed off.

And then of course, the psychological factor is also very strong. When we keep hearing this warning from our mothers and still insist on doing the contrary, our minds are so conditioned to the effect that our bodies automatically feel it."

On smelly discharge: "This could mean that there is an infection or irritation of the cervix because abnormal smell and profuse discharge may be an indication of infection. As for the consistency of the discharge, this is usually due to hormonal factors and may vary even in an individual. This may be profuse, watery or cheesy."

On regularity and the length of one's period: "Ovulation does not function like clockwork. A lot of factors are involved here, like under-nutrition, inadequate rest, metabolic disorders, emotional tensions, the interplay of hormonal levels, anxieties and so on, which may either hasten or delay our menses. Even in individual bodies, there is no consistent pattern or regular cycle, only a range of say, from 28 to 35 days. The average duration of the flow is from three to seven days for most women.

"How does one know if there's something wrong? Only if your period deviates from your usual pattern discerned from observing your menstrual cycles. It may either be that the flow is too heavy, the period is too long, or there is none at all. This condition is also known as amenorrhea — when menstruation is suspended even for a month during your active and reproductive years. You'd be surprised but for some, this may be perfectly normal as long as this is consistent with their usual cycle. *Halimbawa, laging delayed or kaya'y laging paski-skip* in the ages between 20 to 40. But once *na biglang mag-iba*, let's say regular *na biglang nawala* for several months, that's when you might be in trouble."

"All these prohibitions against rigorous exercises, biking, horseback-riding and ballet are rooted to the supposed protection of the hymen — to preserve one's virginity."

On fertile and safe periods: "Theoretically, the common belief that the days one week before and one week after menstruation are supposed to be safe, has a basis. But the trouble is, one can't accurately predict just when she is going to ovulate or when her next period would start so it's almost impossible to know which days would come a week before actual menstruation. That's why we also have a lot of rhythm babies, this being the basic method used in natural contraception. It's not foolproof and the risk is high."

On PMS or premenstrual syndrome: "Like dysmenorrhea which occurs during menstruation, this is characterized by strong painful cramps, headaches or dizziness and a general feeling of malaise. Analgesics may help, but they work more on the cerebral source of pain. Exercises may help and so would reducing one's salt intake because this reduces the swelling of the uterus which contributes to the pain. Your basic rule of thumb is of course that you exercise as long as you are comfortable with it. Because too rigorous exercise may be bad even when you are not menstruating.

Reading from an Obstetrics manual, Dr. Tadiar noted that there have been findings that PMS and dysmenorrhea may be due to mental conditioning and may be other forms of invalidism or childish dependence. It may be that the individual craves attention or is expressing resentment. It may also be a manifestation of her repudiation of the feminine role or castration fantasies. In sum, there could be very strong psychological reasons for this condition.

On menarche and menopause: "Menarche is one's first menstrual

period and it usually occurs at 12 to 13, though some may start as early as nine years old. But there is no fixed correlation between the onset of menstruation and the age of menopause. Usually though, menopause sets in when one is between 46 and 52 years old in the US, and younger in less developed countries because of less nutritional intake. Again, it also depends on individual hormonal levels."

On riding bikes and horses: "All these prohibition against rigorous exercises, biking, horseback riding and ballet are rooted to the supposed protection of the hymen — to preserve one's virginity. But this is a very Victorian and macho concept which seems to say that women are only acceptable to their partners if they are pure, pristine and their seal is unbroken, so to speak. Medically speaking however, the hymen is just a piece of tissue and it varies in shapes, sizes and flexibility. It is elastic so sometimes it can be stretched and sometimes it's not even there at all. The point is, it is not an indication of virginity."

On consulting a reliable OB-Gyn: "Be sure he or she is connected to a reliable clinic, hospital or institution. If you are in doubt, check with the POGS or the Phil. Obstetrician and Gynecologist Society, or the PMA or Phil. Medical Association. So far, there have been very few cases of malpractice, but that could be because medical practitioners protect each other and the consumers are not that aggressive in pursuing their cases."

*For more information on Whealth-care, please see Resources/Review section this issue.



by TERESITA QUINTOS-DELES

RESOURCES & REVIEWS



PUBLICATIONS

"From Virgin to Vamp: Images of Women in Philippine Media by Pennie S. Azarcon-dela Cruz; published by Asian Social Institute. Discusses the stereotyped roles given women and men in the local media, as documented by a five-month monitoring survey of radio-TV programs, commercials, print advertisements, newspapers, magazines, tabloids, komiks, ten Tagalog movies, and a porno publication in 1985. Particularly useful as supplementary material for CommArts students and for women's studies courses. Also as reference material for lobbying on women and media issues, or as source material for media awareness seminars. Includes illustrative clippings of advertisements and news stories.

Available at P70 from: ASI, Leon Guinto, Malate; NCW, 1145 J.P. Laurel, San Miguel, Manila; PILIPINA, 12 P. dela Paz, Proj. 4, Q.C.

The Tribune newsletter, published by the International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC); a 40-page quarterly which features women's projects in the developing world. Each issue carries a particular theme and sections on: descriptions of actual projects and names and addresses of women's groups working in that particular subject area; bibliographic listing of books, training manuals, periodicals, research papers and other useful

materials on subject tackled; synthesis of current research and information about specific women and development themes, and information about conferences, meetings and training workshops worldwide that focus on women and development themes. Presented in simple, easy to understand English with ample illustrations.

Has recently been compiled into four collections: **Women Taking Hold of Technology; Women Organizing; Women Using Media for Social Change, and Women and Small Business.**

Other special publications from the IWTC: manuals and guide books on **Communicating Appropriate Technology with Rural Women; The Tech and Tools Book: a Guide to Technologies Women are Using Worldwide;** clip art books — titled **Rural Women in Action, and Feminist Logos and Symbols; Women and Graphics: a Beginner's Kit;** and six booklets covering the pre — and post-Nairobi developments. All are ideal for contacting organizations and identifying materials for use in dealing with particular women's issues.

Except for the **Tech and Tools book priced US\$10.00, all are available for free, on request of women and organizations in the developing world. Write: IWTC, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.**

ISIS Publications: Isis International Book Series. Two books are published each year, through which women around the world share ideas and experiences for mobilization and organization. Each book produced jointly with one or more women's groups. **Till We Have Faces: Women as Consumers,** was published in 1987 with the Penang-based International Organization of Consumers' Union (IOCU). It devotes one chapter each to the issues of shelter, food, health, technology, transportation and hazardous products — all from the perspective of women.

The Book Series used to be the **Isis International Women's Journal** published from 1984-86, with issues on the Latin American Women's Movement, women and media, women and health, Asian industrial women

workers, and Third World women's struggles and strategies.

Women and Action, a quarterly initiated as a supplement to the earlier **Journal,** as a more regular channel of communication for women around the world to share ideas, experiences and models for organization and action. Contains news of the women's movement around the world and information about groups, conference events and resources.

Women's Health Journal, a bi-monthly produced with the Latin American and Caribbean Women and Health Network. Contains news, meeting schedules, groups and resources, letters, campaigns (against domestic violence in Issues No. 6 and 7) and for body awareness, relaxation and meditation in Issue No. 8.

Special Publications: **Women in Development: A Resource Guide for Organization and Action,** 220 pages. Contains a wealth of resources with a systematic feminist critique of traditional approaches to development while extending the parameters of the search for alternative approaches to WID. **Powerful Images: A Woman's Guide to Audiovisual Resources.** 210 pages. Includes illustrated articles and interviews on the experiences of Third World women's groups in making and using audiovisuals, practical instructions on basic equipment and production techniques, suggestions for using audiovisuals with groups, plus an annotated catalog. Both are priced at US\$12 for individuals/women's groups, including the cost of surface postage.

Membership fee, at US\$15 for individuals/women's groups (US\$25 for institutions) includes a subscription or special complimentary copies of the periodicals.

Contact address for English editions: **Isis International, Via Santa Maria dell' Anima, 30, 00186 Rome, Italy.**

The Philippine Migration Review, a quarterly in-depth research publication on migrant issues meant to stimulate discussions and create migrant awareness towards organization and social action. Some of the issues already tackled are: Mail-order Brides,

The Export of Filipino Entertainers, Overseas Contract Workers' Wages, the Filipino Domestic Helpers. P8.00 (US\$2) per issue, or P40 (US\$20) for a year's subscription (four issues).

The Pinoy Overseas Chronicle, a monthly newsmagazine written in both English and Pilipino that deals with a wide range of migrant and national issues as well as other topics of interest to many Filipinos today. Some of its features are: a pen-pal column, migrant workers' situationers in various countries, actual interviews with Filipino overseas migrant workers. P8.00 (US\$2.00) per issue, or P100 (US\$24) for a year's subscription (12 issues).

The Labor Trade explains how Filipinos become migrant workers and reveal the exploitation to which they are exposed. It surveys the situation of Filipino migrants in the Middle East, Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region. It also assesses the economic effects of the migrant labor system, as well as its impact on the families left behind. Published by the Catholic Institute for International Relations. Newsprint: P36 (US\$33.50); bookpaper: P50 (US\$44.50).

All overseas and subscription rates for both publications include mailing costs. Only checks and bank drafts are acceptable as payment by post.

For more information or for subscriptions, contact **KAIBIGAN**, room 303, Emerald Jade Green Building, 282 E. delos Santos Ave., Mandaluyong, Metro Manila.



AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

The Impossible Dream. 16 mm., eight minutes, animation. Produced in Czechoslovakia. A fast-paced and entertaining presentation of women's double burden problem and the appropriate solution. Ideal for discussing male-female relationship in the home, the value of housework, pay equity, the childcare issue.

Ako si Malakas, Ako si Maganda. Video-cassette. 40 minutes. Documen-

tary. English and Tagalog versions. Produced by Communications Foundation for Asia; written by Malou Jacob. Probably the first docu that tackles the women's issue in the Philippine context: how do men define women, what is the Filipina's role in history and today, what is society's expectations of her, how does she cope and respond.

Includes interviews with ordinary men and women, a female psychologist, hospitality women, women garment workers, government officials; also video clips of taxi dancers, a training course on propriety for hostesses, Muslim and tribal women, female factory workers, etc. Excellent material for starting off discussions on the women's issue for both men and women, as intro for women's studies, or to put women in development issues in the local context.

Tele-aralan sa Kakayahan episodes. Video tapes of Channel 4's half-hour how-to series. Demonstrations and discussions of new skills, with host Cecile B. Garrucho asking questions from the beginner's point of view, thus translating technical terms and methods into layman's language. Tapes includes an 18-part series on **Reflexology**, from its history to practical application; also on **yaya training**, **flower arrangement**, **baking courses**, **herbal medicine**, **embroidery**, **the food trade**, and **business opportunities**.

Other video tapes: **Kiss of the Spider Woman**; **Mona Liza**; **Norma Rae**; **Sexual Abuse at Home** (from **The Probe Team**); **From Priestess to President** (from **Womanwatch**); and **Amah: Maid in Hongkong** (from **KAIBIGAN**).

All tapes may be borrowed (free!) from the **National Commission on Women (NCW)**, tel. 741-72-08. More titles available.

Also from the same source: reel tapes (16 mm) on the following topics: **The Admittance**, **Still A Woman**, **The Seventh Step to Freedom (I and II)**, **Each Day that Comes**, **Where Mrs. Wholly Lives**, **Encounter with Saul Alinsky**, **The Forgotten Farmers**, **Nuclear Countdown**, **Phoebe**, **This is No Time for Romance**, **In Praise of Hands**, **Your Move**, **Every-**

body is Prejudiced; **About Conception and Contraception**, **More Milk for More People**, **Women at Work**, **And They Lived Happily Ever After**, **They Appreciate You More**, **The Role of Filipino Women**, **Extensions of the Family**, **Tiger on a Tight Leash**, **Women in Development (Courses for Action)**; **Girls of Mountain Street**, **Mothers are People**, **In the Minds of Men**, **Behind the Veil (I and II)**; **Visual Ads Portraying Women**; **the Impossible Dream**.

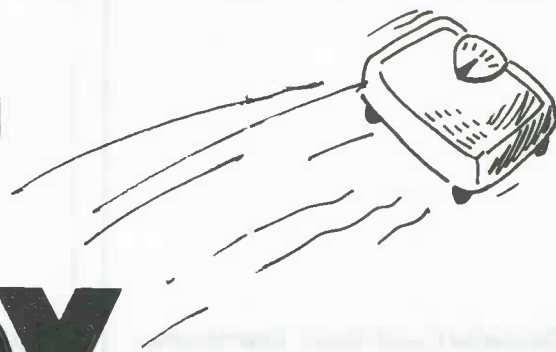
Womanwatch tapes: For free dubbing of episodes from this program, write a formal letter of request and send a Sony L-500 blank tape to: Ms. Anna Leah de Leon; Executive Producer/ **Womanwatch**, 154 Shoe Avenue Ext., San Roque, Marikina. Tel. 947-2956. Topics tackled include **Women and Religion**; **Women and the Law**; **Men**; **Women and Food**; **Women Achievers**; **Single Parenting**; **Marriage**, **Divorce and Phil. Law**; **Women and Media**, **Rape**; **Couples**; **the Women's Movement**; **Women and Health**; **Women in Congress**; **Women and Tourism**; **Teenage Pregnancy and Contraception**; **Mothers and Daughters**; **Sisters**; **Widows**; **Male and Female Relationships**; **Women Migrant Workers**; **Muslim Women**; **Women in the US Bases**; **Family Planning**; **Women's Choice**; **Wife-beating**; **Nature and the Environment**; **Streetchildren**; **the Pinay in Saudi**; **Women Behind Bars**, etc. The episodes usually last for an hour, with host **Rep. Nikki Coseteng** interviewing guests and experts on the subject and providing the context of the whole issue.

How to Catch and Keep a Man: Images of Women in the Local Media. Soundslides, 9 minutes, 27 seconds. Produced by **PILIPINA/Mediawatch Collective**. The audiovisual version of the book "From Virgin to Vamp." Uses mostly clippings of advertisements, tabloid and newspaper headlines, women's magazine articles, komiks stories and soundtracks from radio soap operas to discuss the main roles and characterizations given women and men in the local media. Suggests alternatives and solutions. Ideal for starting off discussions on

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CONFESSIONS OF A FAT LADY

(OR WHY I'M NOT VILMA SANTOS.)



by RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID

When I finally, irrevocably slipped "out of the calendar," as the quaint saying goes, the hubby in an attempt to cheer me up brought me to a fancy Makati restaurant.

I was halfway through my *canneloni* when who should take a seat at the next table but movie star Vilma Santos, with her young boyfriend.

On the way to the car afterwards, I told my husband: "I was feeling depressed about turning 32, but I realize I can't be all that old, Vilma Santos is a year older! Then again," recalling how the actress was a perfect match for her college-age beau, "I don't know if that shouldn't depress me more."

If there is one reason I would want to go through the torture of losing weight, it would be so I could regain my anonymity.

All my life I've just been me, a woman unremarkable from any other. And if a friend were to send someone to look for me, I'd always assume he'd be told to look for "Rina." Now, people who don't know me from Carmi Martin come to the office and look for "*yung aleng mataba*." I have lost my anonymity.

Nowadays, jeepney drivers feel free to make cracks about the space I occupy. Complete strangers at the

beach pause in their leisure to gape at my formidable form. Officemates have begun to treat me like the jolly fat lady, cracking jokes about my modelling in the latest Marie France ad, and worse, where before I used to take offense, I now find myself laughing along with them.

When I was, say, a scant five or several pounds overweight, I could still move about the streets of the city unmolested, lost in the crowd. Now, it's as if I walk around in bright-orange pantaloons. "Is there a certain weight limit beyond which you somehow commit a public offense?" I asked a friend, who promptly told me to go off to the gym.

Through the years I've done a slim-nastic class, walking around a room lined with mirrors on tiptoes, arms stretched up high, supporting an imaginary ceiling; aerobics, jumping and swaying to loud disco music while I struggle not to pass out and lose face; and weights, lifting dumbbells over my head to trim fat off my arms, which I won't be able to use the day after.

I've managed to lose about five pounds each time, before boredom and pain won out over vanity, but once, when I was doing *both* aerobics and weights, I managed to shed off a glorious 14 pounds, reveling in other

women's awe for a full month before I found out I was pregnant.

"You've done it before, you can do it again!" my friends cheer. "Yeah, so I might get pregnant again."

We all keep mental pictures on file of how we must look to other people, and often, the pictures are of ourselves in our prime. That for me translates to when I was in college (that far back, huh), and when I shop for clothes, say, or pose for pictures, I imagine the college-age me.

Then who is this fat stranger staring out at me from the dressing room mirror? Who is that matronly mama with my child on her knee? I pretend she is an impostor, someone who insinuates herself between me and my idea of myself. Sometimes I believe she is my mother . . . in her middle-age.

Suddenly I have come to cherish the people who knew me when I still had a waist, unlike current acquaintances who assume I've been rolly-polly all my life and think I have thus developed a nice, pleasant attitude about overweight. Well, I wasn't born a fatso; in fact I had to endure countless scoldings from *yayas* and elders to "eat more! eat more!" And I have *not* declared it open season on me.

A new friend came rushing in to the office one day. "Do you know D . . . I . . ." she asked. "He said you were his classmate in college and that he had a crush on you. 'You should have seen her body then, all the guys were running after her,' he said." Truth to tell, D . . . I . . . was the class nerd, whose existence I barely acknowledged in my glory days. But just knowing he remembered me that way, why, I coulda kissed the guy, except now perhaps, he'd take the opportunity to get back at me for my hoity-toity ways and tell *me* to back off. Besides, none of the people I know now believe I was ever in a position to set men panting.

My husband should remember, though, after all we met in those days. Which is why, he said, he fell for me, along with the impression I created that I was this wonderfully organized person who kept a checklist of things I must do for a day and methodically checked off tasks I'd accomplished.

I wonder what he thinks of me these days, when the household is run by chance and circumstance, and I get up from bed at 9 a.m. when everybody else has breakfasted, dressed and gone off, including the two year-old who has hied herself off to nursery school.

We were looking through old family pictures one day and the hubby spotted a cache of snapshots from our going steady days. "Look at you," he said, drawing me close. "You were such a knock-out!" "*Bakit naman were,*" I said in my most dulcet tones. "Just lose weight, mommy, and I'd fall in love with you again." End of conversation.

End of marriage? Hindi (pa) naman. Sometimes I wonder about all those cliched lines in the movies, you know, "my wife doesn't love me anymore . . . she's let herself go . . ."

I imagine all those women, loosening their belts, letting out their corsets, shampooing the dye right out of their hair. And I say, hurray for them. Fat is the ultimate liberation.

I think it's hilarious the way American media have gone bonkers over Barbara Bush, as if a woman candidly admitting her age and dress size and proudly sporting her white hair is a person of singular bravery. But only in a society that's made a fetish of fitness, a virtue out of (being) svelte. I knew America was a decadent society when the 700 Club began counting overweight as an affliction visited upon sinners. "There's a person out there, Lord, suffering from cancer, heal him and restore him. There's a woman praying to you Lord, give her

the discipline and strength to get rid of her weight problem . . ." Only the slim are saved.

I wonder who decreed in this world that a woman should have a waist of only so many centimeters, that thighs shouldn't stick out from her hips, that the skin of the neck has to be stretched tight as a drum, and she should be anatomically correct, that is, have only one chin.

I don't hear anyone subjecting Louie Beltran to public ridicule, or to American magazines extolling George Bush's bald spot. But let Cory Aquino gain 10 pounds, and all the male columnists start pouncing on her for eating too many white chocolates.

Of course the thought has occurred to me. In this youth-obsessed world, when time takes its toll, one risks

losing if not a marriage, then self-respect. But I am grateful for not having grown up obsessed with my looks (despite all the foregoing), for it must be a pain to be a great beauty fading inexorably into old age. Because the years *will* march on, and everything we try — creams and unguents, exercise and diet, facelifts and lipo-suction — are but holding actions for the inevitable. Best to have youth in one's heart and mind, so that even when the looks and the figure go, something remains.

A younger woman may have soft, elastic skin, a waist graspable with both hands, stamina and innocence. But I have, if not wisdom, then experience. And if even that fails, there is always the thought that "*mabuti pa ang mga anak, mahal ang mommy nila kahit mataba.*" ☺

RESOURCES and REVIEWS

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women and media issues, or as illustrative material in media awareness seminars and CommArts classes, will soon be available in video-cassette format, with a Tagalog translation.

Available from PILIPINA, 12 P. dela Paz, Proj. 4, QC. Tel. 7754341/7216869

Migrante, Filipina domestic helpers in Hongkong: a 45-minute video documentary about Filipino maids in HK and how they fare. Produced by Kaibigan, MFMW-HK, APMMF, and Asia Visions Media Foundation.

Domestic Slavery, a 30-minute video docu about Filipino domestics in London. Produced by BBC. For rental only.

Invisible Workers, a docu about migrant workers in Europe (UK), and in Latin America.

Runaway Flags, a video on seamen.

A Dollar a Day, Ten Cents a Dance, a docu about first generation Filipinos in the US.

Tape sale: P800 (beta, local); US\$75 (beta). Tape rental: P10 (overnight), P15 (three days).

Available at KAIBIGAN, Rm. 303, Emerald Jade Green Building, 282 E. delos Santos Ave., Mandaluyong Metro Manila.

self-enhancement and community participation; **Maternal and Child Care** zeroes in on self-care, care of children, nutrition education, safe water, and environmental sanitation; **Self-Employment Assistance for Women** which include basic business management skills development, leadership and the provision of capital assistance for income generating projects either as individuals, SPG, CPC or SEA Paluwagan; **Self-Enhancement** which refers to the provision of opportunities for the empowerment of women to discover their strengths and limitations, develop and enrich their potentials, develop self-confidence and productivity, etc; **Community Participation** which aims to help mobilize women, interact with other women, sustain group activities, participate in wider community undertakings, raise issues and concerns and initiate and sustain action; **counselling** which refers to the provision of opportunities for women to explore ways and means of solving their problems either as individuals or in groups, and **Substitute Home Care**, the provision of temporary residential care until such time that the women are ready to go back to their respective families.

For more details, please contact Ms. Flora C. Eufemio, Undersecretary for Programs and Attached Agencies, Dept. of Social Welfare and Development, Batasan Pambansa Complex, Constitution Hills, Q.C.



SERVICES

Social Communication Skills Development along the area of maternal and child care, livelihood development,



*After a while you learn the subtle difference
between holding a hand and chaining a soul.*

*And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning
and company doesn't mean security.*

*And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts
and presents aren't promises.*

*And you begin to accept your defeats
with your head up and your eyes open,
with the grace of an adult, not the grief of a child.*

*And you learn to build all your roads today,
because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans.*

*After a while you learn that
even sunshine burns if you get too much.*

*So plant your own garden
and decorate your own soul,
instead of waiting for someone
to bring you flowers.*

*And you learn that you really can endure . . .
that you really are strong,
and you really do have worth.*

— Anonymous