



Women in Libraries

Volume 27, Number 2

The Feminist Task Force—25 Years

Spring 1998



Feminist Authors' Breakfast theme: *"Rhythms of Life,"* June 28, Sunday, at ALA Annual

This year, FTF's Feminist Author Breakfast theme is "Rhythms of Life." Women authors, expected to include Nancy VanArsdall, Lynn Kanter, and Carol Douglas, will speak on issues such as aging, health, and other topics of interest to women. The breakfast is scheduled for Sunday, June 28, 1998. For tickets, please write Dorothy Granger, Andrew Norman Library, Pacific Oaks College, 5 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena CA 91103, or e-mail her at dgranger@convene.com. Location and cost to be announced.



Scholarship competition for young feminist writers

Spinsters Ink, a feminist publisher, celebrates its 20th anniversary by establishing a new scholarship program to encourage and recognize writing by young feminists. Beginning in 1999, the Spinsters Ink Young Feminist Scholarship, a prize of \$1,000, will be awarded to the high school senior who writes the best essay on feminism. The deadline for submissions is January 1, 1999; the names of the winner and three runners-up will be announced on International Women's Day, March 8, 1999.

In addition to receiving the scholarship, the winner will have her essay published in the national women's magazine, *Hues*, and, along with the three runners-up, will have the opportunity to spend a week at Norcroft, a women's writing retreat in Minnesota.

For information, call Spinsters Ink at 800-301-6860, or e-mail claire@spinsters-ink.com.

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Book Review Section

Aging: Women embracing change— among the rhythms of life, the problems of aging, the joys of maturity

🕒 Making plans

Scott, Lucy, with Kerstin Joslyn Schremp and others. *Wise Choices Beyond Midlife: Women Mapping the Journey Ahead*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57601-051-1, \$13.95 US, \$17.95 Canada.

When you retire, will you be one of the many poor women, or among the comfortable? *Wise choices* can help you answer that question and take care of your future—and the sooner you begin planning, the better.

Wise choices offers a wealth of practical information, not just about health but about managing all the facets of our lives as we deal with the changes that come with maturity. From family affairs to finances, from housing to giving or receiving care, the information is practical and realistic. The book includes forms for assessing needs and expectations, a thorough list of resources, a bibliography and index.

Many of us already know that women retire with less money than men while, at the same time, we live longer. But how many have assessed our situations and made realistic plans for retiring? One of the most useful chapters, unique among the other manuals reviewed here, is "Financial Literacy: The Economics of Aging." Scott reminds us that much of women's work is unpaid or underpaid and that on retiring, our income is likely to be only 58% of men's. After describing the sobering facts, she gives us numerous tips and worksheets to enable us to change our situations. Recognizing that "women of our generation have...grown up with contradictor and often disabling beliefs about money," she guides us by asking a series of questions, making management of our finances simple and obvious, providing financial guidance without condescension—and that is indeed rare.

Now that those of us in our 40s and 50s see retirement rushing towards us, it is reassuring to hear that "it is never too late to take stock." *Wise choices* is designed to empower us, to guide us to greater independence and confidence, and is skillfully organized to do just that. —M. Tainton



The road that lies ahead can be difficult without planning, according to the authors of Beyond Midlife.



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Women in Libraries

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~holman/FF/>

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Contributors: Annmarie B. Boyle, Iona College; Bonnie Jean Cox, University of Kentucky; Pamela Crossland, West Texas A&M University; Betty Glass, University of Nevada at Reno; Joni Klemencic; M. Gregory, WTAMU; Trudy Hanson, WTAMU; Laura M. Quilter, University of Illinois at Chicago; Bernice Redfern, San Jose State University; Diana W. Shelton, University of Wyoming; Madeleine Tainton, WTAMU; Tracy Zink, WTAMU.

🕒 It's all in your glands, dear

Lynch, Lee and Akia Woods, editors. *Off the Rag: Lesbians Writing on Menopause*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-934678-77-4, \$12.95.

Now that we feminist baby boomers are approaching 50, it's time we gave a lot more thought to changes that come with aging, specifically, **THE CHANGE**, or menopause. This is what Lynch and Woods have done, and, as a result, more than 40 other women have taken the time to communicate their experiences in this collection of stories and essays.

Sarah Dreher, in her essay, "Don't worry, dear, it's really all in your glands," suggests using our experiences to connect with others: "If you're over

🕒 Body care manual

Montreal Health Press, Inc. *Menopause: A Well Woman Book*. Toronto: Second Story, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-929005-82-1, \$14.95.

What exactly are the facts? Surrounded by myth and old tales, amounting mostly to rumors, many of us approach menopause with trepidation. The changes it brings to our bodies are more obscure to us than childbirth, and that's obscure enough. What we need is a care manual for the mature body, and *Menopause* is just such a helpful, clear, and factual manual. The book takes the mystery out of the physical changes we may expect and symptoms we may experience, assembled by a group of women involved in women's health in Canada.

In the introduction, there is a chart which lists

"If you're over the age of forty and want to start a conversation with another woman over forty, start talking about menopause. Instant sisterhood. It cuts across race, class, and sexual orientation."

the age of forty and want to start a conversation with another woman over forty, start talking about menopause. Instant sisterhood. It cuts across race, class, and sexual orientation."

Henri Bensussou, in "The sacred m words," says "menopause is like being caught up in a vortex. You're sucked in without forewarning, whipped around a few years, and finally tossed out on an opposite shore, battered and relieved, a more sober and wiser person."

Writers mention a range of positives, like greater feelings of freedom. Some experienced greater sexual responsiveness. Pele Plant, in "A change of mind," feels "kinship with other beings...I catch a glimpse of the power of the crone."

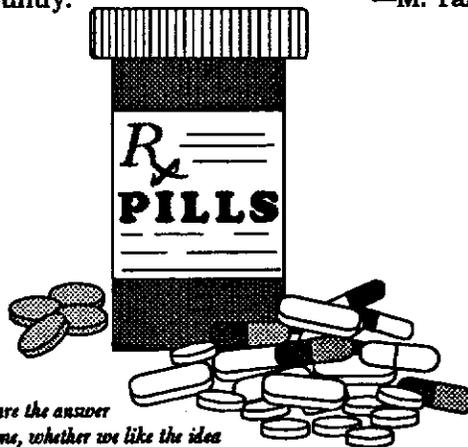
Laura Post, Joan Nestle, Valerie Taylor, Susan J. Wolfe, Terri de la Pena, and many others also contributed.

As Merrill Mushroom observes in "My life as a volcano," "There's not very much information about menopause, and most of the best of what there is comes out of our own sharing of personal experiences." This book contains a wealth of these experiences, and I, just entering menopause myself, am grateful for them. Just knowing how other women have dealt with this stage in our lives allowed me to share their strength, especially when I saw how much tougher it is for some of us. It is too bad, in a way, that *Off the rag* is so lesbian-specific in approach; I'm sure this will keep some women from reading it, yet the book is packed with valuable knowledge that would benefit all of us. —M. Tainton

common rumors—malicious lies, really—concerning midlife. Beside each rumor is the location in the book where we can find the facts of the matter. The contents are organized into categories like time of life, changes, medications, and continuing health. Accompanying discussions of hormones, surgeries, and so on, are detailed drawings. Topics like osteoporosis, politics, biology, sexuality, and hormone replacement therapy are all bared to scrutiny. Throughout, summary boxes include useful lists and highlights. A bibliography and index are included.

It is like having, at last, a reliable travel guide, ready to hand as we travel through this mysterious new country.

—M. Tainton



*Pills are the answer for some, whether we like the idea or not. But pills may be overprescribed when menopause is treated as an illness. Some authors in *Off the Rag* tell us that finding the right solution is not always easy.*

Book Review Section

🕒 Lines that read strength

Martz, Sandra Haldeman, editor. *Threads of Experience*. Illustrated with fabric-and-thread by Deidre Scherer. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 1-918949-92-0, \$19.95.

"But then," thought Alice, "shall I never get any older than I am now? That'll be a comfort, one way—never to be an old woman—but then—always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like that!"

—*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll

That is the assumed trade-off for aging: beauty for wisdom, but it is not so neat and comfortable an exchange as that. *Threads of Experience*, a collection of poems and prose edited by Sandra Haldeman Martz with selections accompanied by fabric-and-thread images by Deidre Scherer, articulates, through word and image, some of the complexities of being aged.

You will not find challenging, ground-breaking usage of poetic form here, but the accessibility of the poetry does not diminish its worth. These poems are about dignity, wisdom, fragility, fear, awareness, resignation and hope. Some read like prayers, such as Rose Mary Sullivan's "Life Lines":

As time etches lines
across my face,
may they read strength,
not weakness,
also patience,
especially with myself
as my feet slow in pace,
my hands grow clumsy.

And others, like Charlotte A. Cote's "Only in Dreams," express our most feared cruelty of aging, the entrapment of the spirit in a body past its vigor:

a thin smile trickles across her face
to appease the public eye
but it is her feet that tell us
there is a churning inside,
the ankle twisting the foot
in endless circles, fenced-in soul
that yearns to break the boundaries-

All of these poems hit their mark. On reaffirming the dignity and importance of living an ordinary, ordered life is Nancy Bennett's "Morning Song" and Sue Nevill's moving "no place like," which tells the thoughts of a woman struggling against the limits of her 81 year old body and memory to keep her daughter from putting her in a home:

that home she talks about well that's
no place for me
no room for Mother's hutch
my wedding suite Bill's paintings
heart pounds so loud it hurts oh

These poems are not for the elderly, they are from the elderly, warnings to live life, to experience and store up memories, to be ready for life after life:

But harvesting now
from dwindling stores,
I taste each day
with a connoisseur's tongue
and slowly savor rich, rare time
sweetened by many suns.

(from "Harvesting Mellow," by Helen Freidland).

And the immensity of death, deftly expressed by David Katz, MD, in "illiterati," where using the book as a metaphor for the person, he writes:

upon these pages traced in purple
varicosities: what past, what
peril faced; what bold
audacities: moments held
transfixed by breeze insinuating
spring; what firm determination in the face of winter
wind; what laughter,
sorrow; loves and loss...

for if each death
disclosed, in verse or
prose, the life it took: what hand
could daily bear to turn the pages of this book?

These poems by themselves would be plenty. But they are each accompanied by fabric images by Deidre Scherer and this coupling adds another dimension to them. Aside from the obvious provision of an image for the subject of the poems, the medium Scherer uses: fabric, thread, sewing, resonates with the life process. The filaments of thread akin to the slender streams of experience that runs through a life, the sewing, uniting, mending, holding-fast, enclosing, echoing the processes and struggle of bringing a life together to form a coherent whole. The fabric, the basic structure that results, reflects the patterns, textures, scars of a life, which has endured the sharp and sudden pain of each stitch. The result is a rich quilt, each patch telling its own story, each piece critical to the whole.

These portraits are absorbing. They are pleasing enough at arms length, but draw you in until you see each subtle change in the pattern of the fabric and every fine stitch around the eyes. They are amazingly detailed and complex, some showing virtual brush strokes of thread as in "Maria in Memory" and "Flower Bed." Scherer achieves a great aliveness in "Firelight" and a pallor of death in "Third Light" that you would not believe achievable with fabric. She is a remarkable artist.

Threads of Experience is a jewel. Just 33 pages, it offers wisdom and beauty that could fill volumes.

—Annmarie B. Boyle

🕒 Devastated by loss

Goulding, Mary McClure. *A Time To Say Good-Bye: Moving Beyond Loss*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-918949-74-2, \$14.

In 1992, at the age of 67, internationally renowned psychotherapist and author Mary McClure Goulding was widowed and faced life alone for the first time. Although a successful transactional analyst and blessed with supportive family and friends, she found the loss of her husband-career partner-soul mate devastating. *A Time To Say Good-Bye* traces her three and one-half year struggle to cope with her grief, confront the loss of her husband, and achieve a positive self-image which allowed her to enter the last phase of her life with confidence and emotional independence.

Goulding learned that recovery from the death of a loved one is a spiral process, rather than linear, with repetitive emotional passages through bereavement, despair, happiness, depression, sadness, delight, grief, and joy. She frankly discusses survivor guilt, anger at the deceased for dying, the stress of holidays, being alone in a coupled world, sexuality, and the return of creativity. Grief counselors will appreciate insights Goulding brings from her experiences as a psychotherapist, while laymen may take comfort in the realization that even professionals have difficulty coping with the death of a spouse.

A closing chapter provides Goulding's modified "good-bye formula" for bringing closure to a bereavement. This process results in peacefulness and freedom from the burden of unresolved mourning. While acknowledging the legitimacy of mourning for loss and being old and alone in a couple-oriented and youth worshipping culture, Goulding also recognizes the absence of guaranteed companionship throughout life. An atheist, with no belief in an afterlife, she advocates the emotional risk of loss involved in cultivating friendships and other supportive relationships. She shares a dream message from her husband to "find joy each day," and ends the book's introduction with, "even after tragedy, life can be an adventure."
—B. Glass

🕒 The paths we take

Hauser, Susan Carol. *Full Moon: Reflections on Turning Fifty*. Illustrated by Barbara Van Arnam. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-93-9, \$14.95.

Full moon comprises a series of short essays like journal mullings, one woman's approach to a major life milestone at fifty years. This is a book to spur some journal keeping, and it is a pleasure to hold with its high production values in the four-color art

and paper. The serene paintings of flowers contrast with the author's experiences and harmonize with the meditative mood of the prose. Overtaken by amazement, Hauser writes of the time "when my personal female sauna kicked in. Hot flashes. Hormone storms. The fireworks that signal the end of fecundity...news from the body front: this woman is shedding the garment of the lunar clock."

Hauser reevaluates the path she has taken, encouraging us to do the same. Asking, "Where on earth do I want to go when I am sixty?" she lays out a course for herself: "...the celebration of my sixth decade on planet Earth begins tomorrow....I plan to continue the self-consciousness of my journey toward this birthday, with one variation: I am going to be especially aware of how I spend time. I am going to keep saying to myself, 'Is this what you want to do today?'" Me, too.
—M. Tainton

🕒 How to travel alone

Ben-Lesser, Jay. *A Foxy Old Woman's Guide to Traveling Alone*. Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-89594-789-7, \$10.95.

Don't let the title fool you; this travel guide has valuable tips for women of all ages preparing to take a solo journey. One part of the book is devoted to exactly what one would expect—travel tips. Although difficult to thoroughly cover all possible topics, Ben-Lesser scratches the surface of many. Some of these are general to all travellers—transportation, lodging, luggage, obtaining passports, etc. Other topics pertain specifically to the solo traveller such as personal safety and interpersonal encounters.

Not only does Ben-Lesser provide practical travel tips, she lends insight on how to be a confident solo traveller. For many women, the mental preparation of how to enjoy oneself while being alone can be more of a task than attending to details like making reservations and planning itineraries. Towards this end, Ben-Lesser lists nine steps to confident solo travel, each with an awareness exercise.

With a background in psychotherapy, the author makes the important distinction between a tourist and a traveller. A tourist is one who gets away to temporarily escape her daily life. A traveller, on the other hand, is one who uses her enthusiasm and curiosity to learn more about our world and move toward a richer life experience. Without confidence and awareness during the adventure, a woman cannot gain these benefits. Whether one is looking for a contact address for "Wander Women" or a confidence-booster to get out there and travel her neighborhood or the world, this quick read of a guide will contain something of interest for any woman preparing to take a solo journey.

—J. Klemencic

Book Review Section

🕒 A pair from the Hen Co-op

The Hen Co-op. *Growing Old Disgracefully: New Ideas for Getting the Most Out of Life*. Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1994. Cloth, ISBN 0-89594-673-4, \$; paper, ISBN 0-89594-672-6, \$12.95.

The Hen Co-op. *Disgracefully Yours; More new Ideas for Getting the Most Out of Life*. Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-89594-804-4, \$14.95.

The authors' definition of growing old disgracefully does not, they say, imply scandalous or outrageous behavior:

We use 'growing old disgracefully' as a challenge to the image of 'growing old gracefully.'...To age gracefully is to continue to be the passive, obedient, unobtrusively good girls we were socialized to be. We're not prepared to do that; we're going to make up for lost time.

Disgracefully begins with brief biographical sketches of the six authors, followed by explanations of the individual circumstances that brought them to the Hen House for a course of the same title, which introduced them to each other and launched the idea for the book. The British and American authors all are white, have been married, and have similar middle-class backgrounds. *Disgracefully yours* includes a few pieces by other women which provide some additional diversity.

Both books include photographs of old women, quotations, and poetry as well as short anecdotal prose pieces. The books' strength rests in the individual, personal, open statements of experiences, concerns and joys, reminiscent of a consciousness raising group discussion. The focus is on the present, but with recognition of how the authors have been shaped by the past and awareness that the future holds increasing health problems, reduced independence and death. Emphasis is upon risk taking, overcoming previous socialization and accepted roles, and playfulness. The authors stress the importance of finding a group of women who can support the individual. *Disgracefully* includes two resource lists, books and organizations. *Disgracefully yours* tells how to set up and implement a "Growing Old Disgracefully" group, including some activities. These practical, positive, personal books speak to those of us in our 50s or older who are seeking ways to make positive changes in our lives.

—D. W. Shelton

🕒 Debunking the mythology

Gerike, Ann E. *Old is Not a Four-Letter Word: A Midlife Guide*. Illustrated by Peter Kohlsaas. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57601-002-3, \$10.95.

As we get older, we become aware that we do not feel older—we're still the same people we always were, with the twin advantages of experience and knowledge. At the same time, there's this feeling that we're *supposed* to feel different. In *Four-letter word*, Gerike deals with the myths of aging, including such notions as the inevitability of mental decline, menopausal madness, and memory loss. In readable, large type, illustrated by cartoon sketches, she buries these myths where they belong and instead talks of aging's advantages and how we can learn to look ahead with pleasure. The key to the whole process is change, and more than accepting it: relishing it.

Gerike is a therapist, and she really knows how to put a positive spin on things. She recognizes that words influence as well as reflect attitudes, and she makes the reader more aware of the harm we do ourselves and each other when we tell derogatory jokes about aging or celebrate "over-the-hill" birthdays with black balloons.

She also recommends dealing realistically with health and financial issues in order to enjoy longer life. At the end is an annotated list for further reading, and an afterword about real problems that affect some of us, like depression and anxiety.

"However you live your life," she concludes, "the main thing is to experience it fully, and not let fears of growing older keep you from having a good time. So let's get on with it!"

—M. Tainton



🕒 *Anthologies from women and aging specialist, Papier-Mache*

🕒 Martz, Sandra Haldeman. *When I Am an Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple*, 2nd ed. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1991. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-15-7, \$18; paper, ISBN 0-918949-16-5, \$11; large-print paper, ISBN 0-918949-83-1, \$17.

Sandra Haldeman Martz has assembled a collection of short stories and poems that address the aging of women in this anthology. More than sixty contributors present a wide variety of attitudes toward the maturing of women. Topics covered fall into three categories: a message from the old, observations about the old, or comments from those who are aging.

The opening poem, Jenny Joseph's "Warning" (which contributes the book's title), depicts a woman who anticipates freedom from traditionally-accepted behavior when she is old. In the poem "Post Humus," by Patti Tanna, an old woman happily describes how she wants to be remembered after her death.

The photographs create powerful images when associated with the corresponding poems. This anthology has the ability to reach out to everyone regardless of age, opinion, or personal experience. Martz's selections help us see life as a full circle, bridging the gap between the fear of the unknown and the realities and challenges we face as we grow older.

—T. Zink

🕒 Martz, Sandra Haldeman, editor. *Grow Old Along with Me—The Best Is Yet to Be*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-87-4, \$20; Paper, ISBN 0-918949-86-6, \$12; large-type paper, ISBN 0-918949-96-3, \$17.

Out of thousands of submissions, Martz chose a few high quality pieces for this collection of short creative works: stories, autobiographical sketches, poems, and photographs. Themes of growing older, including retirement, companionship, or the death of a loved one, are presented through individual pieces that are funny, poignant, and unsentimental, yet that celebrate life. Written by both women and men in their fifties and older, these choice selections are full of surprises. The words are complemented by the black and white photographs showing the individuality and vitality of older men and women.

—D. W. Shelton

🕒 Martz, Sandra Haldeman. *I Am Becoming the Woman I've Wanted*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1994. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-50-5, \$18; paper, ISBN 0-918949-49-1, \$10.

In performance studies, scholars often discuss the importance of "performing the body," meaning that the performer not only verbalizes the words of a writer, but also makes those words visible through the use of the body in the performance. Sandra Haldeman Martz has once again assembled an anthology of writings and photographs by and about women that help the reader focus on what it means to be female, this time focusing on how women perceive their bodies. In this anthology, women speak eloquently of adolescence (Pamela Ditchoff's "Fourteen"), self discovery (Joyce Lombard's "Back into This Body"), and of childlessness by choice (Iu carter's "Forever"). From birth to old age, the writers and photographers in Martz's anthology help the reader see the world from a woman's standpoint and perhaps, in some cases accept the aging process with less than quiet grace. For example, Mary Sue Koepfel's poem "In Praise," triumphs with the repeated phrase: "I like the sound of old women—." *I Am Becoming the Woman I've Wanted* is a celebration of life and living that has something of value for all readers.

T. L. Hanson

🕒 Martz, Sandra Haldeman. *If I Had My Life to Live Over, I Would Pick More Daisies*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1992. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-25-4, \$18; paper, ISBN 0-918949-24-6, \$11; large-print paper, ISBN 0-918949-84-X, \$17.

In her second edited volume of writings and photographs by and about women, Sandra Haldeman Martz has once again collected works that touch the heart and stimulate the mind.

In Joan Connor's short story, "Broken Vows," a disastrous family vacation becomes memorable because of its impact on the daughter in the story, who chooses to separate herself from her father. Recalling the incident as she prepares for her own wedding, the daughter, Molly, realizes, "Every step, every choice is an exclusion of possibility, a diminution of the boundless self."

The works in this volume speak to us of choices and possibilities, of lost opportunities and dashed hopes. The insights we gain by gazing at the accompanying photographs or lingering over the words of Joanne Seltzer's poem, "The Life I Didn't Live," help the reader separate the "important" things from the "urgent" things in life. Indeed, Martz helps us not only to pick more daisies but to smell and sense them in every way as the words and pictures of these collected pieces unfold.

—T. L. Hanson

🕒 Facing cancer, facing death

Stocker, Midge, Editor. *Cancer as a Women's Issue: Scratching the Surface*, 2nd edition. Women/Cancer/Fear/Power series, Volume 1. Chicago: Third Side, 1994. Paper, ISBN 1-879427-02-8, \$11.95.

Stocker, Midge, Editor. *Confronting Cancer, Constructing Change: New Perspectives on Women and Cancer*. Chicago: Third Side, 1993. Women/Cancer/Fear/Power series, Volume 2. Cloth, ISBN 1-879427-17-6, \$24.95; paper, ISBN 1-879427-09-5, \$11.95.

Together, the first two volumes of the "Women/Cancer/Fear/Power" series comprise a strong and empowering introduction to cancer activism, and an intense look at the effect of cancer on women. Each of these volumes is a collection of essays from "women with cancer or cancer histories" — women "whose lives have been changed by the experience of cancer in themselves or another." The editor, Midge Stocker, is a long-time feminist who avowedly collected this material for both personal and political reasons: "It is personal: I want to avenge my losses. It is political: I want to fight for a better future." (CAAWI).

Women's Issue includes eighteen essays, an introduction from the editor, a resource list, and an index. Almost all of the essays are intensely personal, relating the women's experiences with cancer in themselves, their female partners, or their mothers. Some of the essays are also explicitly political. The book does, however, lack structure; the wide variety in style and content can be confusing.

Confronting cancer includes nineteen essays, a preface, introduction, resource list, an index, and the "Women's Cancer Agenda: Demands to the NCI and the US Government." This second book is better structured, with the more personal material in the first section, and the more political material in the second. Essays that particularly stood out include Buitrago's "Cancer Action Guide":

If your doctor has just told you that you have cancer or that you may have cancer, the best thing to do is to get into action. You may first want to cry, scream, and yell that you are afraid and besides, it is not fair. It's better to rant and rave a bit than to pretend nothing unusual is going on. But then you need to start learning everything you can about your situation.

She lists several steps for women to take control of their situations. Soffa's "The Boob Trap: Debunking Myths About Breast Cancer" (CCCC) also provides important information for women with cancer. Additionally, Winnow's "Lesbians Evolving Health Care" (CAAWI) and Steingraber's "Lifestyles Don't Kill. Carcinogens in Air, Food, and Water Do" (CAAWI) provide reasons and examples of women's

cancer projects forming. Finally, Hardisty and Leopold's "Cancer and Poverty: Double Jeopardy for Women" (CCCC) and Arditti and Schreiber's "Killing Us Quietly: Cancer, the Environment, and Women" (CCCC) are chock-full of statistics to use in campaigns, and remarkably well-cited.

Both works include some reprints and a fair amount of original material. Writers in both explore alternative as well as conventional therapies, and all approach the disease from an empowering, feminist perspective. Many of the writers are angry, and the extensive data provided in the essays proves they have a lot to be angry about: -- Cancer rates are rising precipitously: breast cancer has increased from one in twenty in 1940 to one in eight in 1992 (Hepler, CCCC). Conventional medicine still has an unhealthy disregard for women's health: most cancer trials and experiments are done on men, and physicians continue to willfully over-prescribe hormone and other therapies without adequate testing, consultation with the patient, or drug-interaction evaluations (Soffa, CCCC). The cancer establishment (National Cancer Institute and American Cancer Society) continues to de-emphasize environmental causes of cancer morbidity (Arditti & Schreiber, CCCC). And finally, the lack of an adequate social safety net in the United States means that any disease - especially a chronic life-threatening illness such as cancer - is itself a serious threat to health and well-being (Hardisty & Leopold, CCCC).

Horror stories such as Murtaugh's story of repeated medical incompetence ("No Big Deal," CAAWI) and Raffa's story of her experiences with bureaucratic indifference to her friend Lou's needs ("Facing Death as an Alternative," CCCC) make both collections difficult to read at times, but equally wracking were the stories of women such as Lanoue ("Fighting Spirit," CAAWI) and Buitrago ("Here's How Things Are Going Bulletin," CCCC). Buitrago and Lanoue are women who do everything "right": they explore alternative therapies and conventional medicine, stay physically fit, and have support networks and compassionate health professionals — and still cancer returns to them, or takes a partner. Nonetheless, -- although the material is often difficult, each of these works has something to offer any woman or man faced with cancer in themselves or a loved one. The personal accounts are both moving and inspiring, and also effective in arousing anger and, hopefully, action.

The material actually just proved more difficult for me to work with than I had thought. I think it was helpful for me personally, however. An interesting note: as I was reading these books, on the bus, in a local bar, etc., several women struck up conversations with me about cancer, and now there is a waiting list for the books among my friends.

-- A collection of material from those who have experienced cancer as care-givers or loved-ones

would also be very welcome, and perhaps give voice to some of the men who are affected by the toll cancer is taking on women. Additional material giving voice to women in developing nations would also be welcome. ~~

These books are essential for women's studies collections. Medical libraries, and public libraries serving as consumer health resource centers, should also acquire them. Additionally, libraries with strong collections in political history of political activism may wish to collect these books as documentary evidence of the birth of a politicized women's cancer movement.

L. M. Gullter

🕒 Two voices: new edition

Butler, Sandra, and Barbara Rosenblum. *Cancer in Two Voices*, 2nd ed. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-16-8, \$12.95.

As *Two voices* begins, Barbara has recently received a diagnosis of stage-three breast cancer. Believing that she is only the first among her friends, the book is written to provide a mirror for those touched by breast cancer who have not seen their lives in print, and to provide each of the authors with more self awareness. In 1996 one in eight women was diagnosed with breast cancer; the book was reissued during "Breast Cancer Awareness Month." Written from 1985 to 1988 and first published in 1991, it is an intimate glimpse at how this particular lesbian couple, both professional women, dealt with life during the three years between the diagnosis and Barbara's death. The new edition includes more recent information about Sandy.

The book is primarily a conversation over time between the partners with interlude sections providing a deeper analysis of particular issues. It is not a "how to" book nor one that advises others; it is an open, moving, and tender account of the choices, feelings, fears, hopes, and joys of both women as they live their lives within a community of women and relate to their families. Barbara says, "To live and die consciously is what I want...I have cancer, but it is not consuming me."

Both explore their ambivalent feelings about "blood money" received in an out-of-court malpractice settlement, the injustice of the health care system, and personal responsibility for one's own health. Reflecting feelings related to the betrayal of her body Barbara writes, "I was no longer fluent in the language of my body, its signs and symbols, and I felt lost."

—D. W. Shelton

🕒 Breast cancer journal

Pike, Jennifer. *A Safe Place: A Journal for Women with Breast Cancer*. Vancouver, BC: Raincoast, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-55192-108-1, \$14.95 US, \$18.95 Canada.

A *safe place* is a guided journal, leading from diagnosis through treatment to future goals. Each chapter includes quotes from other sufferers, including personal points of view, tips, and advice.

Each chapter begins with an article from the author on her experience, followed by partial blank pages with questions to be answered or quotes in the margins to respond to.

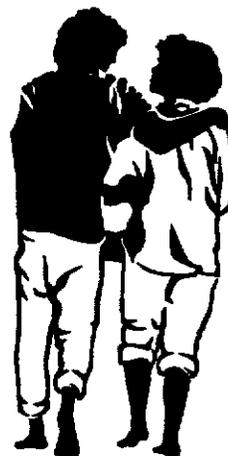
In Pike's beautiful book, her structured technique enables women to focus on their experiences, even those who don't normally keep journals, at a time when introspection is desirable and almost inevitable, even for those not accustomed to it. It is like having a conversation with good friends, sharing their experiences, with spaces to fill in your thoughts, responses, and ideas.

The book is organized topically rather than chronologically, including chapters on the diagnosis, treatment decisions, relationships, body image, plans, and dreams. At the end is a list of suggested reading, video programs, and services. As the author and publisher are Canadian, emphasis is on Canadian materials and resources.

Knowing about the experiences of others can be tremendously reassuring, as Pike puts it, when talking about losing her hair, "I was terrified about what was happening to my mind and body during chemo, and was immensely relieved when I discovered that it was also happening to most of the other women I talked to. It is a dark subject, and we all had tears to cry, but we usually found much to laugh about, as well."

A *safe place* is a support group in a book, and can help us come to grips with the inconceivable by exposing it.

—M. Tainton



Book Review Section

🕒 Recipe for comfort food

Farley, Blanche Flanders, and Janice Townley Moore, editors. *Like a Summer Peach: Sunbright Poems and Old Southern Recipes*. Illustrated by Deidre Scherer. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-89-0, \$14.95.

What goes together better than food and art? A little gift book full of simple pleasures, *Like a summer peach* includes poems about food and the experience of eating accompanied by recipes and illustrations in stitchery. The poems are sometimes fun, sometimes sad, replete with memory of all the associations of taste and smell: holidays, family gatherings, growing up, raising children, mothers, fathers, and babies.

Maxine Kumin's "Appetite":

I eat these
wild red raspberries
still warm from the sun
and smelling faintly of jewelweed
in memory of my father

Alternating are old-fashioned, simple yet classic recipes for dishes described in the poems, like raspberry preserves and biscuits.

Sally Lunn Bread
from *Like a Summer Peach*

1/2 cup real butter
1/3 cup sugar
4 cups sifted flour (plain)
1 cup lukewarm milk
1 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1 package yeast

Cream butter and sugar. Add other ingredients. Beat with a wooden spoon. Let rise until double in bulk, 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Pour in well-buttered tube pan. Let rise again to double, 40 minutes to 1 hour. Bake 45 minutes at 350 degrees F.

The editors assume some knowledge of cooking procedures. —M. Tainton

🕒 Holiday memories

Martz, Sandra Haldeman, editor. *There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57601-053-8, \$9.95 US, \$12.95 Canada.

"Absence is one of the most useful ingredients of family life, and to do it rightly is an art like any other." This sentiment, attributed to Freya Stark, appeals strongly to me after all the holidays we have just been through. Somehow family gatherings and all the associated traditions/baggage are, on the one hand, dreaded, and on the other, yearned for. Too few of us have the skill or the will to avoid them, possibly because of the way they become imbued with golden light and warmth when left to memory.

In *Holidays*, more than 40 writers, most of them women, share memories of favorite or especially meaningful family gatherings, individual facets of universal experiences. In and among the vignettes, they share recipes for traditional family dishes. The following excerpt is one example of the kind of love-imbued memory typical of these holiday accounts. It has special meaning, I think, for us baby boomers. This vignette is by Cappy Love Hanson:

Mother's Three-Days-after-Christmas Dinner Menu

Spam, either:
baked,
sautéed with onions, garlic, and oregano,
in rice or noodle casserole,
in grilled sandwiches with cheese, or
scrambled with eggs.

Spam?

Yup. For years it appeared on our plates three days after Christmas. We had finished the turkey by then and were, Mother reasoned, jaded by all that rich holiday fare.

Besides, we had to either use up the Spam or throw it away. Mother hated to waste, though in this case the rest of us would have gladly let her make an exception.

How did we end up with cans and cans of Spam? During the Cuban missile crisis in the '60s, Mother stockpiled it, along with canned fruits and vegetables and gallon bottles of water, in the hall closet. We lived near Los Angeles and figured to be a high priority bombing target. If we weren't vaporized, we'd eat pretty well.

For years we teased Mother unmercifully about Spam, before finally admitting that planning for an emergency was a pretty good idea, and that she had our best interest at heart. Chance, after all, favors the prepared.

Of course, it was easier to forgive after we'd finally eaten it all.

—M. Tainton
Women in Libraries

🕒 Vivid look at care-giving

Starkman, Elaine Marcus. *Learning to Sit in the Silence: A Journal of Caretaking*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1993. Cloth, ISBN 0-918949-44-0, \$14; paper, ISBN 0-918949-43-2, \$9.

In this vivid, insightful story-cum-journal, Claire Brenner, the character name for Elaine Marcus Starkman, shares her very personal story as care-taker for her mother-in-law, Ma. Claire is an English professor, mother, wife, and now nurse to this aged woman who also is developing Alzheimer's. Claire finds little time to devote to herself and experiences tremendous guilt for desiring a life of her own. Dealing with Ma's decline challenges Claire's mental and physical well-being. Claire even begins to daydream about her own journey to old age. Eventually, Ma painfully leaves the Brenner home and moves into a nursing facility. This account does not offer simple answers but takes an ethnographic approach to understanding the challenges and struggles of caring for the aging. —M. Gregory

🕒 Nurse's aid on the night shift: fiction

Romo-Carmona, Mariana. *Living at Night*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-22-2, \$10.95.

This debut novel focuses on the world of Erica Garcia, a young, working-class Puerto Rican lesbian. When Erica's concern over her mother's illness causes her to drop out of college, she finds work as a nurse's aid at a state institution for developmentally disabled women.

Set in the 1970's, *Living* realistically describes the treatment of the mentally disabled of that era. Supposedly a training school, the aids have no time for teaching or training since their job, basically, is to warehouse the patients.

On another level, Romo-Carmona portrays Erica's relationships with the women in her life: her mother, sister, and lover. As the story progresses, Erica learns to take charge of her life and find her place in the world.

This well-written first novel is recommended for women's studies and health collections. —B. Redfern

🕒 The battles and triumphs

Chandler, Janet Carncross. *Time for Love: Assisted Living Viewed by One of the Very Old*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-918949-91-2, \$9.

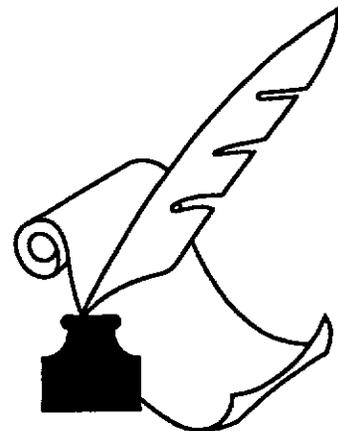
Emily Dickinson is famously quoted as having said that when she "felt that the top of her head was coming off" after reading something, that "that is poetry." For years during and after graduate school, I assumed that feeling must apply to elite, high-culture poetry. It has taken this book of poetry by the late Janet Chandler to broaden my view.

Chandler's poems and prose pieces about the experiences of a widowed older woman in a long-term care home give us the same emotional reaction that Dickinson wrote about. Chandler enables us to experience the battles and triumphs both large and small that make up her life, whether they be the pleasure of breakfast, learning to live with the other residents of the care facility or preparing her sons for her eventual death. The pieces form a connected chronology, from diagnosis of her pulmonary fibrosis through her time in the care facility and her meeting and new love life with at in her last months.

Throughout, Chandler's humor, insight, courage, and toughness show those of us who are younger and still in good health that, whatever your age and physical condition, if you bring joy to the act of living life gives you back joy as well.

When I was younger I would not have called this poetry. Now that I am older, I am grateful for poets like Chandler who can give me a vision of how triumphantly we can live to the very end of our lives.

—B. J. Cox





Women in Libraries
American Library Association
Office for Literacy and Outreach Services
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611



*The Coffee's on—
Hope you'll be there!*



Next issue:

More on the Feminist Authors' Breakfast in Washington

Review section: Art and memory

Annual conference calendar