THE NEW WOMAN

--Dolores Morrill
May 17, 1967

"The identity crisis for women did not begin in America until the fire and strength and ability of the pioneer women were no longer needed, no longer used, in the middle-class homes of the Eastern and Midwestern cities, when the pioneering was done and men began to build the new society in industries and professions outside the home. But the daughters of the pioneer women had grown too used to freedom and work to be content with leisure and passive femininity.

It was not an American, but a South African woman, Mrs. Olive Schreiner, who warned at the turn of the century that the quality and quantity of women's functions in the social universe were decreasing as fast as civilization was advancing; that if women did not win back their right to a full share of honored and useful work, woman's mind and muscle would weaken progressively, and civilization itself would deteriorate.

We now know that the same range of potential ability exists for women as for men. Women, as well as men, can only find their identity in work that uses their full capacities. A woman cannot find her identity through others--her husband, her children. She cannot find it in the full routine of housework. As thinkers of every age have said, it is only when a human being faces squarely the fact that he can forfeit his own life, that he becomes truly aware of himself, and begins to take his existence seriously. Sometimes this awareness comes only at the moment of death. Sometimes it comes from a more subtle facing of death: the death of self in passive conformity, in meaningless work....faced with the slow death of self, the American woman must begin to take her life seriously."

--Betty Freidan
THE FORFEITED SELF
from The Feminine Mystique

Deep, deep down within, we know we are living in a world moving rapidly into the future of space, increased possibilities and varieties of existance, longer life, world government, changing family structures, community living,....things both exiting and often quite terrifying. Here we are, we women, faced with tremendous possibilities and opportunities, won for us long ago by other women; yet we are moving backwards in time, retreating from this age that has been won--the day of woman's humanity--the new age of woman.

It is here--this new age. Not something we must fight for--it has arrived. But instead of reaching out and embracing it, we have retreated from it. It was won for us by such women as:

Eleanor Roosevelt - who open up global travel for us, and showed that one's life is not solely determined by that of her husband's or children's.

Madame Curie - co-worker with her husband and seeker for the sake of mankind.

Amelia Aehart - adventurer, whose life was not bound to the home and family.

Susan B. Anthony - who fought the battle for us all to release us from political and economic tyranny, which had turned over income and children to the husband's ownership and authority, and kept women nicely on a pedestal, with no voice to speak nor decisions to make.

But we are afraid of embracing the present and the future that lies before us. It takes more strength and courage to wade through the sludge society builds around some mysterious mould called "role of woman," touted in the magazines, moaned for by the male, and bombarded at us from the screen. We would rather become victims--

of the home--which we are to keep blean and beautiful

of our children--whom we are to care for diligently every waking hour

of our husbands--whose decisions, job, and dreams are supposed to be ours as welll

of other men--who are threatened by a 20th century women (that is, the 19th c. men)

of our communities --which cry for our attention in a thousand varieties of jobs and needs, important and trite.

of the magazines, TV, advertisements, and all the rest which constantly try to let us know, in one form or another, what being a woman is all about.

It is easier to bend with the decision of others aa to what we are--how much harder it is to take hold of the visions set before us by the few brave women of our history, both past and present, and willingly set out to chart our own course and destiny, and find a place in the process of participating in the bending, shaping, decision-making process of history; in helping mankind into full humanness--a process which has generally been left to the male.

Before we can really leap into such a process, we must take a look at the world we are rapidly moving into--what we are preparing for...

1. Smaller world, emerging races
2. Highly developed minds, even to point of changing our physical character
3. No difference between boys and gairls--just children
   same education, same dress, same games, same purpose in life
4. Women in every phase of life, with equal salaries and opportunities--she will no longer be able to suckle her existence off the male.
5. She already is gaining tremenous economic power, simply because the men die off sooner than she does, and leave her with their money; but she will soon have the power of edonomic decision as well, and tremendous political power.
6. To be woman no longer means to bear children, or to suckle existence off of them either.
7. Birth - from reprod. cells, choose own sex and heredity
   (a reality ever since Italian doctor created life in testtube in 1961)
8. Families will have little in common with the closed patriarchal families now in existence.

But, how are we preparing now for this kind of future, for even though it is not quite yet upon us, our children will be living amidst the kind of changes impossible to comprehend. How will we become the kind of persons who will prepare our children for the kind of future they will walk into?

So far, we women have been retreating from it...we don't like to face it. Though (we have been afraid to embrace images offered by the E. Roosevelt's, Bows, Aehart's...) often frustrated, resentful, hostile to our children, living in vague or overt unrest because we are aware that life is more than we have been willing to make it. Just what illusions do women of our day build for themselves to escape or retreat from the present and future before us?

1. Farm illusion - work to raise family, ordered, serenely content with home and children, happy to let husband make decisions for family.

RESULT: We are not farm creatures any longer, but city, with all the rhythm, variety, and education of the city.

2. Community worker illusion - self-fulfillment somehow through many-varied activities--inability to say no, because desparately need encouragement and approval of others.

RESULT: becomes frustrating and non-fulfilling, pressure-building--and find no amount of approval from others gives us what we need.

3. Seeker of fulfillment illusion - develop own talents for self.something to do...
RESULT: boredom sets in here, and we become just as closed as when we were confined to the house.

4. The male image illusion - I can be a woman in 20th century by becoming like the male.

RESULT: Hostile males, and masculine shrikes--both still disatisfied.

5.- Victim - suckler off home and neighbors--gives in to mood created by others

RESULT: I don't want to think philosophy

6. SOW IMAGE - men to create history, women to bear men.

Our society helps us to live in illusion out of the 19th century by various images and symbols? (use chart - RETREAT - NEW AGE)

The new woman is now here--there can be no more retreating. She is emerging everywhere. The dominant masculine bitch is a thing of the past. The sow is no longer to produce, the victim only remains a dull girl, and we are so terribly aware of it, whether consciously or unconsciously. No longer can the housewife be content to have her husband support her, while her own training and gifts go by the wayside in a world of crying NEED for their involvement, sitting around home waiting for children to grow up so they can finally DO something. No longer can she live in the illusion that her decisions in life, and that of her husband's and children's must be based on her husband's job. No longer does she have the ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ privilege of the illusion that her self-fulfillment can come from fulfilling some biological function that will no longer even be hers ~~xx~~ one day. No longer can the working woman see life only in the perspective of helping her husband buy a new house or car, or supporting a fatherless family, or finding some vague self-fulfillment.

Who says that the man's job is the primary one

that children must not leave the home until they are ready to begin public school

(in this day of increased opportunity, the child is missing out terribly to be confined to his own family and home after 2 yrs. of age)

who says that the only neuroses children should be subjected to are their parents

who says that women's life span should be to be educated and raised to marry, home, bear children, send children off to school, piddle around in a few activities to fill the extra time, greet children from school, send children off to marry, and then die at 45 because everything she had lived for is now gone. She is then faced with the fact that, in this age of increased age span, she now has about 30 years left ahead of her, and probably 15 to 20 of those will be without her husband, as the possibilities increase on his earlier demise.

We can no longer retreat into fond discussions of the terrible American female who dominates the country, or long for images out of the past which no longer fit our modern existence--we are trying to capture illusory dreams of non= existent possibilities. It is no use to retreat to some European idea of womanhood--that too is only a fantasy now. Women all over the world are awakening to the possibilities for their full humanness, and believe me, there are many countries way ahead of us in this matter. The charming subsurvient Japanese wife is fast becoming a thing of the past; the Old World wife and mother of Europe has aged and her younger counter-parts no longer can view life in this manner.

Where shall we look for this new woman? She has many faces. She is too diverse to be put into some simple mould created by the pulp magazines, or Playboy longings; or ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ mother's for little boy husband's, or ~~xx~~ left in the walls of her home waiting until her children are grown, or striving for sexual adjustment so she can be a "truly fulfilled woman," or filled with such a variety of jobs with no real intention or direction that she can't even make a ~~xxx~~ objective decisions

about;where to expend her life, or like the large portion of women who haven't the foggiest notion how to invest their lives at all.
Where shall we turn to for the New Woman who can live with exuberance, who accepts with joy her femininess, who embeaces the 20th century, willing to throw herself into history?
She is diversified and intriquing. She looks with joy to women who break through into this century from out of the 19th century bondage they, their men, and society set upon her. (see charg for NEW WOMAN images)

She is not Male, she is Woman ---but not because of some biological-social nature. She is a culturally evolved being. In a day of massive change and disintegration, of excitement and terror, of beauty and horror, or increased meaningless and increasing search for meaning, she offers unque gifts to the world. She must look at what she has to offer in a new light, not in something out of past that no longer fits with the changing role before her. She offers compassion in an age of increasing neglect; st rength and direction in an age of discouragement and seeking; courage and endurance in an age of escape from reality; understanding and cooperation in an increasing corporate-world view of life. She has always been a group being--it is not new to her to fit into a pattern of group life. But in this new age, the way of expressing these things is different--they can no longer be expressed solely in the home or immediate surroundings, living for the sake of the children, or the husband, of the local church with its parachial problems, or her own self-fulfillment.

She embraces her Womanhood--her sexuality--she is not afraid of being a sexual person--I do not mean some superficial sexiness--but affirmation of her womanliness. (illustrations of some who have done so) needs no man to tell her she is beautiful — could not assure enuf — must decide.
I do not end this without saying that the greatest opportunity comes for the New Coman when she lives in a New jFamily who is united in a common mission in the

world. They may not have the same tasks in this mission, but they have a common direction and purpose in their existence that is more than barbecuing around the backyard and refereeing children's battles. or pampering a husband in his retirement yrs. It is INVESTING, if you will, your life in history, as a total family. However, lest I be misunderstood , a woman's decisions as to what her mission is in life cannot be determined merely on the basis of what the rest of the family is like. She may get no support from the family at all--she may feel completely alone--and that is sad. But she is not stopped by that family--nor does she send the family down the drain because of her own individual ego-centric interests, in some illusion she is benefiting mankind. A New family in the 20th century must, if they are to be in mission, re-interpret their roles in that family. It is not decreed that the woman shall take care of the children, and the husband will be the bread-winner. DECIDE. It is not destined that she was the dishes and he repair the roof. DECIDE. It is not decided that ~~the children are the~~ little girls will help mommy keep house and little boys will help daddy with the yard. It may be that the woman will be the bread-winner because the man is superior to her in handling his children, or in cooking the meals, etc. DECIDE. Noone can decide these things for you--no magazines, TV ads, or the likes. Your family must,decide every detail of your life and its plan before it in the world, in order to be a Missional family.

And helping her family become aware of their possiblities in this 20th century is the 20th century Woman--mystery beyond man's control, capable of wreaking destruction, yet having sustaining ongoingness--on the surface sometimes emotional and unstable, but actually durable and stabilizing agent. The woman, out of her sentimentalized and biologized image of the "Earth Mother" is a powerful symbol to her family, and to her world. If we are to survive, then we must embrace such symbolism and reinterpret ~~them~~ it to the world.