

# Women's Lib and History

By MARGARET KOCH  
Sentinel Staff Writer

"What we know of American History is largely the history of American men."

How true, I thought.

The statement was made by Madeleine Nobel.

She's a historian and a women's libber, and she will teach two courses at UCSC starting next month. One is almost a straight history course: "The American Woman: 1920 to the Present." The other is "Women in Contemporary America," dealing with the best thought of the current women's lib movement.

"I was horrified when I began getting into women's history, to realize that I had emerged from all my training and had never been introduced to women's part in any of it," she explained.

"I had to start digging to find it."

Women, she said, have been "subtly herded all their lives — their existences manipulated." Men's lives have been manipulated also —

in that they are born into a dominant role and are expected to assume it. Men are raised in a certain climate regarding women.

"It's basically a problem of human relations."

Society is in trouble today, she points out. "Our society has manipulated both men and women into positions that are defeating to personal satisfaction and happiness."

"Fathers say to their sons 'Work hard and get success and you'll be happy.' The sons do this and become successful and then wonder why they aren't happy. Mothers say in effect to their daughters 'Get married, be a good housekeeper, a good wife and mother and you'll be happy.' Daughters do all this and find it doesn't automatically ensure happiness."

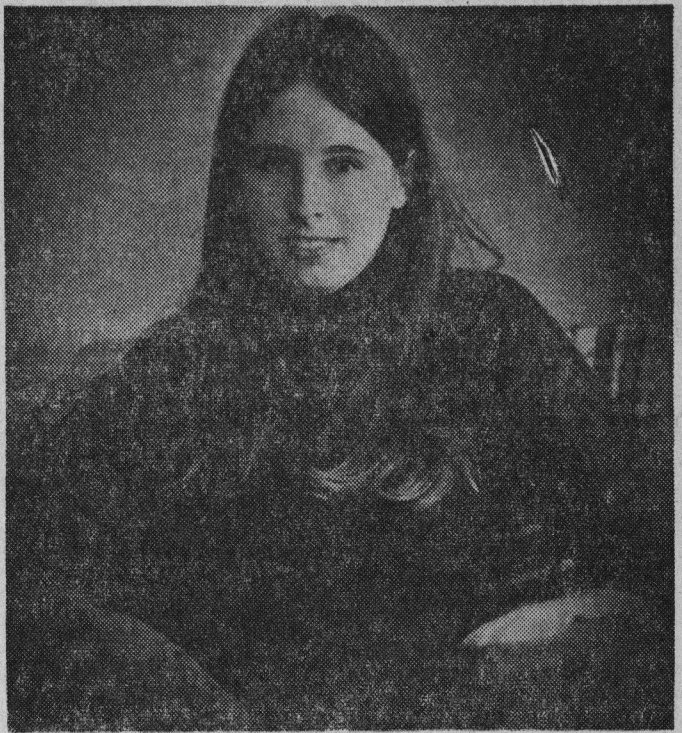
Our society is "seductive" to women, she suggests, holding up such goals as "a house in the suburbs, a husband to pay the bills and make the decisions and tell her she's beautiful..."

On the other hand "women are put down constantly in all areas of life."

Many women just cut themselves off during the family years, and actually deteriorate mentally.

"They seek self-identity in their husbands and children, which is hard on the husbands and children. Because very often the only expression of power a woman has, is through her manipulation of her family."

Sigmund Freud dealt women a devastating blow, she feels, with the narrow physical in-



MADELEINE NOBEL

terpretation he bought to the whole problem.

"He built up a framework of 'normality' around women with sexual motives attributed to everything. Of course women envied men! Men had more freedom, more interesting lives. Women were forced to choose between home and family or an outside world that was not always friendly. Men could have it all — the warmth of home and family support AND the excitement of a creative career."

The church has always put women down, too, she notes: "Religion has always been considered one of the 'acceptable' outlets for women, but women were always left out of the pulpit. Even today people can't get used to women presiding at baptisms, funerals, weddings and delivering sermons."

As an interesting sidelight she cites THE WOMAN'S BIBLE by Elizabeth Cady Stanton — written in 1896, mind you! Now out of print, the unusual old book features Biblical paragraphs interpreted in the "modern" light of 1896.

And then there were the Grimke sisters, Sarah and Angelina, who in the 1830s and 1840s traveled around and debated the Bible with anti-feminists.

"Women's Lib isn't all that new," Madeleine says. "And at the turn of the century (1890) the 'woman question'

was foremost in everyone's mind: Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were giving a strong push to the suffrage movement. Women's clubs were forming in almost every little town — more and more women were going to college. One contemporary writer terms this period 'The Great Sexual War'."

Today the "hard core" of the movement is the bra-burning and shouting and marching element. But there is a much larger women's lib element that wouldn't dream of burning a bra, but nevertheless is 100 per cent for equality for women and realizes women have been second class citizens for too many centuries.

"I feel that teaching women's history is an important part of the movement. Women have a lot to learn from getting a historical perspective."

Madeleine is a very feminine woman herself, a person who had no thought of career when she graduated from Wooster College in Ohio with a degree in history.

She married and taught elementary school for two years but decided there wasn't enough intellectual challenge in it, entered graduate school and got involved with women in history and their liberation.

She is writing her thesis at present, for University of Michigan.

"And that's important, too."

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