

Campus visitor defends women's funny bones

By BILL MCGRAW

Feminine humor is her book's topic

Are women funny?

Certainly, thought Ann Beatts, so it came as quite a shock when her boss disagreed. Ms. Beatts, 28, was working at National Lampoon, the popular monthly humor magazine, at the time.

"Chicks aren't funny," that's what he said," Ms. Beatts told an audience of about 100 students and others last week at UM-Dearborn. "If I had been a man, I would have punched him in the nose. But I'm a writer, so we did a book."

The result is "Titters," the world's first anthology of humor by women, which Ms. Beatts and friend Deanne Stillman co-edited. The 192-page book, which is neatly designed and crammed with spiffy artwork, is a collection of parodies, satires, comics, one-liners, gags, essays, poems, and several categories which defy classification. One hundred women worked on the project.

Among other things, "Titters" contains a parody of "Mademoiselle" and "Glamour" called "Slammer," in which female convicts serve as guest editors. Angela Davis is pictured on the cover. "Whole Birth Catalogue," a guide to birth for hip parents, gives advice on what modern moms and dads are naming their kids: "Moonunit" and "Khoutek" are two suggestions. Former Southfield resident Gilda Radner, now a star of NBC's "Saturday Night Live," offers her particularly bizarre diet tips.

• Chew every bit of food 100 times

- Eat everything out of a dog bowl
- Chew gum with your food.
- Bake yourself messages inside your food like "Kate Smith called and she wants to borrow your dress."
- Remember what happened to Mama Cass.

IN A TAKEOFF on the bestseller "Total Joy," author Maribel Moron tells readers they should run along side the car in the morning as "he" leaves for work. There's also a piece on the "Gri Sprouts" in which the youngsters win merit badges for feats which are definitely not found in the Girl Scout Handbook.

MS magazine, which also is savaged in a "Titters" parody, called the \$7.95 book "screamingly funny, intelligent and hilarious." Ms. Beatts claims "it's funnier than earth shoes."

The author, a tall woman with a frizzy brown bowl of hair who toted a huge, floppy purse, pointed out that even though there are jokes in the book "which only a woman could tell," "Titters" is not for women only. "It's humor by women, but it's not women's humor," Ms. Beatts told her sexually-mixed audience as she took off a silky beige blouse to reveal a pink "Titters" T-shirt.

And, she stressed, it proves women are funny indeed.

"There's an idea floating around the vast jelly-like substance called the public" that women have no sense of

humor," said Ms. Beatts, who last year won an Emmy for her writing on "Saturday Night Live."

"But a sense of humor's weird. No one will admit to not having one. If you're a boy in high school, having a sense of humor means you lift up girls' skirts with a ruler and pour spit on girls' heads to make like they have dandruff."

"If you're a girl, having a sense of humor means you laughed when a guy poured spit on your head. When boys claim they like girls with a sense of humor, they mean sally on the head."

MS BEATTS SAID that even if women are funny, their upbringing effectively squelches any mirthful impulses. "It's true, girls aren't supposed to be funny. I wasn't brought up to be funny—it just wasn't part of the package."

During her 90-minute talk, she cracked numerous jokes herself, pushed her book and delved into the concept of humor. "How many people have to think something's funny for it to be funny," she asked in a slightly nasal New York accent. "One? Two hundred? Who do the laughers have to be? What if they're convicts? It seems like if you say something and one person laughs, then it's funny."

Ms. Beatts also addressed the question of bad taste, which some people say fills National Lampoon and "Saturday Night Live," because both find

plenty of chuckles in things like sudden death, teenage zits, ethnic groups, John F. Kennedy and Canada.

MS magazine for instance, after heaping generous praise upon "Titters," also termed it "disgusting." Ms. Beatts herself said however, she defended bad taste.

"What is going too far? Why is it OK to make fun of farting but not cancer," she quizzed the generally appreciative crowd. "Humor is like holding up a fun house mirror to life—if it's there, it's there. How can you go too far? Didn't God go to far? He created all of this."

ANOTHER SENSITIVE topic, which Ms. Beatts took up eagerly, is the criticism some women have hurled at her for the rough treatment "Titters" dishes out to several feminist tenets. Lilly Tomlin actually quit the editing team because she thought the book's title was sexist. The MS reviewer read the section entitled, "Women Poets Who Have Killed Themselves. Or Ought To," and then asked herself, "How can I like a book that, among other things, desecrates (poet) Sylvia Plath?" Ms. Beatts just laughed.

"No political movement is noted for its humor," she said. "Did you ever hear anyone ever ask Caesar Chavez to tell a lettuce joke?" She did say, however, that her editors rejected everything that was "self-deprecating."

jokes about rape, and stuff that wasn't funny."

That answer appeared to satisfy at least one female critic, a U-M student

who grabbed a seat before the talk and huffed to a friend. "No, I'm not going to laugh. I already don't think it's funny." That quickly ended, however, the first time Ms. Beatts let loose with a string of wisecracks. "You're laughing," the critic's companion pointed out. "I know," she shot back. "This chick's a scream."

Call for help with phone aid

A new phone device may be the answer for the elderly person who wishes to remain in their home, but who worries about the possibility of an accident or sudden illness.

Called Phone-Care, the monitoring device can be programmed to give a call to help to five telephone numbers the person has earlier chosen.

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If the first number dialed does not answer or is busy, the device will dial the second.

The miniature remote control that activates the distress calls is small and light and can be worn around the neck or carried in a pocket. It doesn't require special phone lines. When it is not making emergency calls, the owner's phone can be used normally.

The Michigan Phone Care Co. is at 3166 Milville, Lapeer, telephone, 313-664-9526.

Life span offers prize for designs

Lifespan, Inc. is sponsoring a competition this year to select two designs for their 1977 Christmas cards. The competition, open to all non-professional artists and art students, seeks original designs in keeping with the pro-life philosophy of the organization.

A \$50 prize or scholarship will be awarded. Two designs are

needed: one of a religious theme and one of a non-religious design. The design idea must reflect reverence and respect for life, the keystones of the pro-life philosophy.

Due to printing restrictions, the designs should be simple and uncluttered.

Entries need not be in color, since the finished card will be printed in varying shades of one color. Samples of cards used in past years are available for inspection in the Lifespan office, 4274 N. Woodward, Royal Oak.

Entries must be submitted to Mrs. Diane Trombley, 28299 Couzens Court, Madison Heights, by May 15, and the winner will be notified by Jan. 1. Please include name, address, phone number and school with all entries.

St. Vincent De Paul party set

The Ladies of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul will sponsor a spring card party at noon Saturday, May 21, in the St.

Vincent and Sara Fisher Home, Inkster at Twelve Mile, Farmington. Tickets at \$2.50 will include card planning, refreshments and prizes. Reserve tickets with Edna Eagan, 886-6691, or Glendora Karp, 962-3736.

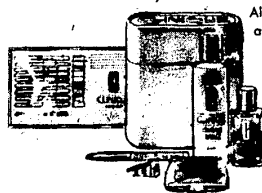
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