

U.S. Society Devalues Older Women

ANN ARBOR A society that has "devalued more than half its population" evoked far-ranging debate during the 26th annual conference on Aging recently at The University of Michigan.

That phrase by key speaker Wilma Scott Hyde, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), set the tone for the three-day forum, examining the financial, legal, social, emotional and sexual handicaps experienced by women during the second half of their life span.

The meeting, attended by some 600 persons, was sponsored by the Institute of Gerontology, a joint unit of the U-M and Wayne State University.

"While both men and women feel a reasonable anger and anguish at becoming aged, it is women who are most heavily punished by the

process of aging," declared writer Susan Sontag, speaking on "The Double Standard of Aging."

"Ours is an industrial, consumer-oriented society that prizes youth and despises aging. But men are less penalized by the process. They grow older but wiser. Their faces become lined with character." Women get wrinkles, Miss Sontag said.

"Aging tends to bring men higher job status and greater expertise in his field. But the attributes associated with femininity, such as non-competitiveness, dependence and docility, do not improve with age."

"Widowed or divorced, a man is usually considered more sexually attractive and more eligible for remarriage at a later age," Miss Sontag said.

"And they remain younger women," observed psychiatrist Pauline B. Bart of

the University of Illinois.

"In a first marriage, the age differential between a groom and bride averages 2.2 years. When a divorced man remarries, the gap is 4.5 years, and for a widower, it is increased to 8.3."

"Thus, in the age brackets 45 to 64, although the male-female ratio is 1:1, there are three times as many single, widowed and divorced women as there are single, widowed and divorced men."

Professor Bart added that "some years ago, if a man left his middle-aged wife, unless she had flagrantly misbehaved, there was community censure. Now I think the pattern is becoming quite common, with little social pressure for fidelity or commitment."

Dr. Mary S. Calderone, executive director of the Sex and Information Council of the United States, pointed out that while today's women un-

der 50 tend to have more "financial, professional and social independence and fuller — and earlier — sexualization," they may still experience strong social resistance when they carry out this freedom.

"The older woman, the more pronounced this," Dr. Calderone added, "apparently because youth is still looked upon as the time when it is permissible to experiment."

"If women over 50 are constantly trying to compete with young women, they must inevitably fail in the comparison. They must develop their own standards as well as self-confidence so that, if needed, they feel truly free to try new and more productive life styles."

In addition to social and family relationships, the conference at the U-M focused

on the financial status of the older woman.

"It still comes as a surprise to people that so many older women are in the work force," remarked Virginia R. Allan, deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs in Washington.

"In 1972, 14 per cent of the total labor force and 36 per cent of all women workers were aged 45 and older. They work for the same reasons younger women and men work — they need the money," she said.

"It is tragic indeed that most mature women workers are economically disadvantaged. In 1971, the median income for fully employed women aged 25 to 34 was \$5.15. The median for women between 45 and 64 was approximately \$5.80.

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Four grandchildren joined in the festivities.

George and Victoria Abel were married Oct. 25, 1923, in Grand Rapids.

Gift Suggestions Given For Hospital Patients

PONTIAC For years people in the community have been donating gifts and holiday decorations to the patients at Clinton Valley Center (previously Pontiac State Hospital) and Oakland Medical Center.

Ted Panaretos, director of the community relations department, urges that at Christmas — time all donations be new. He says that "second hand gifts, or hand-me-downs, tend to make the patient feel like a second-class citizen — especially during Christmas."

Panaretos has issued the following suggested gift list:

For men he recommends giving dress and sport shirts, sweat shirts, jackets, trousers, suits, socks, topcoats, underwear, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, shaving cream, suspenders and ties.

The women enjoy dresses, blouses, skirts, nylon hose, nightgowns, stoles, shawls, shoulderettes, lingerie, cosmetics, purses, head scarves, permanent kits, hair rollers, bobbie pins, talcum powder,

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Booklet Sale Will Aid Research Fund

Volunteers for the Children's Leukemia Foundation offer the booklet, "Christopher Eli-The Keeper of Santa's Reindeer" as children's Christmas stocking-stuffer. It is available for a contribution of 35 cents.

The illustrated booklet was written for the foundation as a fund-raiser for leukemia research. It is now part of

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Club Plans Benefit Ball

The Automotive Booster Club B-19 will hold its 12th annual crippled children benefit ball Saturday, Dec. 8 at the Club Venetian, in Madison Heights.

All proceeds from the dinner-dance will be donated to the Metropolitan Society for Crippled Children and Adults, an out-patient therapy center serving the tri-county area.

Tickets are \$17.50 per person and available from Jack Kotter and Associates, 23718 King Drive, Mt. Clemens.

Minn. Women Set Luncheon

The University of Minnesota Women's Club will hold its annual Christmas luncheon on Friday, Dec. 7, at 12:15 p.m. in the home of Mrs. Marlow Alsager, 3833 Morningview Terrace, Birmingham.

The women will make favors and collect gifts for patients at Herman Keifer Hospital in Detroit.

Catholic Club Meets Dec. 7

A club for separated and divorced Catholics will meet Friday, Dec. 7, at 8 p.m. in the St. Columban School, 1770 Melton, Birmingham.

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