

Women's Equity Action League

Networking to get things done

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

When members of Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) run a booth at the Michigan State Fair in August, they will be working under a poster that reads "Uncle Sam wants you to have a baby."

WEAL members wrote news releases and alerted local news media along the route that West Side Mothers marched in its protest against welfare cuts late in June.

Members of the group took part in the ERA rallies that were staged simultaneously in Detroit, Ann Arbor and Lansing during the Freedom Festival days.

"Whether the need is bodies or phone calls or letters or marching, it's all part of the networking to get things done," said Cathie Aerni, a Farmington resident who became state president of WEAL in January.

MS. AERNI describes herself as "an old civil rights activist" stemming from her days in Immaculate High School.

Her overall philosophy concerning the inordinate amount of hours she

spends in lobbying and working, mostly for feminist issues seemed to be summed up when she said, "You have to keep working. Government is not the enemy but you have to keep letting them know what you want."

She, as many WEAL members, have dual memberships with groups that are working for similar goals where support services are exchanged on a regular basis.

"We cooperate as fast as we can to get the word out," she said.

WEAL networks mainly with organizations such as the National Organization for Women, American Association of University Women and the Women's Political Caucus. But Ms. Aerni's own networking goes back to her Marygrove College Alumni, which has remained her personal mainstay in that behalf.

She describes WEAL members as "mostly college educated women — masters degrees are common — who believe that education without discrimination is the big answer to a lot of our problems. State membership is about 250 and we're all active."

"We're smarter than the Moral Majority," she continues. "We've been there longer than they have. They say they're protecting the family. We've been doing it for 13 years."

THE MICHIGAN chapter of WEAL

is responsible for dealing with state issues it deems to change, but backs up federal issues protested by the national organization.

Nationally it was the moving force behind filing more than 250 sex discrimination cases against universities and colleges.

WEAL developed, and got passed (in 1974) the Women's Educational Equity Act, which authorizes grants for the development of non-sexist curricula and tests; and non-discriminatory vocational and career counseling to achieve educational equity for women.

WEAL led efforts to force newspapers to stop sex-segregated want ads, and helped develop the first legislation proposing major reform in Social Security laws that eliminated discrimination in benefits to women.

It has worked to eliminate discrimination against women in sports and in the military.

It holds a trust fund to provide financial and technical support to women seeking redress from discrimination in the courts.

THE BIG issue at hand now are, locally, the cuts in education proposed by the state during budget-making time, and, nationally, the proposed Family Protection Act.

"Everything we've been fighting against has been put together in one

neat bill for us," Ms. Aerni said of the Family Protection Act, which now is in a U.S. Senate committee.

"With a 54 percent divorce rate, it assumes that mom is going to stay home and live happily ever after. That just does not reflect reality."

"It even has a clause that would prevent a possible protester from a judicial review. So what are our courts for?"

"It reads like it was meant to tie us into knots and keep women barefoot and pregnant. It is manipulation of the highest order."

To counter this, Ms. Aerni said, "Everyone has to take responsibility into their own hands. Wake up and put the knife to the throat of that representative who you think is hurting you. Explain in no uncertain terms he's going to be out of a job if he's not paying attention. And I say he because that's the gender we have working for us now."

"It can be done," said the woman who is finishing her master's degree in business administration at Wayne State University while doing free lance computer conversion jobs.

"I have gotten rid of a porno theater in three weeks and I personally take credit for getting at least one senator to vote for abortion rights through personal intervention. Just by hammering away."



Cathie Aerni
WEAL state president

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— Cathie Aerni

Collector's plates

Trade items set track record for appreciation

By Corinne Abett
staff writer

The ordinary household dinner plate has some rich, fancy cousins. Collector's plates are now rated the third-most collectible in the world.

The 1980 Bradford Book of Collector's Plates, published by Rand McNally, calls them "the world's most-traded art."

And like many big-time trade items, this one has its own trading market. The Bradford Exchange, which publishes current quotations from around the world on a regular basis, giving name, issue price, high, low, quote and change.

Could plates be the currency of the future? Certainly, the track record of a great many of them is surprising to the uninformed.

Although there's a long history of commemorative plates, the first official collector's plate was "Behind the Frozen Window." Issued by Bing and Grondahl of Copenhagen, it sold for 50 cents. The current quote is \$4,000.

Lenore Crawford of Southfield, interior designer for Town & Country Interiors of Bloomfield Hills, got hooked on

plates six years ago.

Her husband (she's widowed now) bought her two plates after she'd had some surgery. The plates had paintings by Edna Hibel on them. While recuperating, Mrs. Crawford had time to read and research the plate field.

"I started buying like crazy," she recalled. "First as a collector. Then we started as dealers in a small way about 2 1/2 years ago."

MRS. CRAWFORD NOW has plates and related articles in a small, attractive area on the second floor of the Town & Country store on Telegraph just south of Long Lake. She said that much trading is done by individuals and dealers all over the country as well as through the Bradford Exchange.

"Gone with the Wind," she said, citing an example of appreciation in value, "started at \$21.50 (Scarlett, Edwin M. Knowles, 1978). I believe it's selling now for over \$300. 'Over the Rainbow' (a picture of Dorothy, issued by Knowles in 1977 at \$19) is selling for upwards of \$350."

The plates all look hand-painted, but the paintings are reproduced on the



Lenore Crawford turned plate collecting from a hobby into a business, adding another dimension to an already busy life. She's restoring an old house in Farmington and is active as an interior designer.

plates by a transfer process. They are done in large, limited editions of 5,000, 5,500 and 10,000. Each collector's plate is documented on the back as to artist, edition size, date and other pertinent facts.

While Edna Hibel and Norman Rockwell are among the best-known artists to have their art work reproduced on plates, they are two of hundreds of artists, known and unknown.

"You name it," Mrs. Crawford said

of the huge variety of subject matter, "there's a plate for it. . . . Anything with a child, a clown, an animal is popular."

Along with the variety of subject matter, Mrs. Crawford said, the plates appeal because of nostalgia (in the subject matter) and moderate prices. People who can't afford to collect paintings, silver, gold jewelry or glass can afford the plates.

"The less-expensive plates are more popular," Mrs. Crawford said. "Most people buy a plate because they like it — some buy to speculate."

She added, "Most people buy for their own pleasure."

She said that if the plate happens to appreciate, it makes them feel "very clever, very knowledgeable."

PERHAPS WHAT MAKES plates different from fine arts which also appreciate is the extremely well-organized market, the detailed information on the new releases, the reputation of the companies involved and the careful documentation.

Much of this comes through Plate World, which is subtitled The Magazine for Plate Collectors. This quarterly, done in slick format, contains lots of color pictures, feature stories and market information. "Plate Collector," a monthly magazine, also covers the field in depth.

Among the companies issuing the plates are many with international reputations — Royal Copenhagen, Arabia, D'Arceau-Limoges, Haviland, Lalique, Dresden, Rosenthal, Royal Bayreuth, Balleck, Royal Doulton, Spode,

Wedgwood, Hummel, Orrefors, Gorham — the continuing list reads like the royalty of the china and porcelain world.

Names of the artists range from the great painters of the past such as Claude Monet, Raphael, Renoir, Mary Cassatt and Frederic Remington to contemporary artists such as Edna Hibel, Elke Sommer, Red Skelton, Charles Schulz, LeRoy Neiman and hundreds of others. Because it's a business as well as a hobby, Mrs. Crawford, who is known professionally as "The Plate Lady," is happy to talk at length about editions which are almost certain to appreciate.

She said the new Norman Rockwell series that's coming out is already sold out to dealers.

Good bets for appreciation she said are the first in a new series. "It's usually the first one that climbs," she said.

And there's no single age group that collects plates more than any other, Mrs. Crawford said.

"Young people are collecting. Children are collecting," she said adding that adults of all ages collect.

Children, she pointed out, can become collectors because what many receive as a weekly allowance would start them out. And because of the tremendous variety of subject matter, there's something to appeal to every age group. Name a favorite subject — animals, birds, flowers, sailing ships, inventors, history — and chances are excellent that Mrs. Crawford will be able to find a plate series to match it.

Mrs. Crawford is at Town and Country every day but Wednesday.

Staff photos by Dick Kelley

Recommended ...



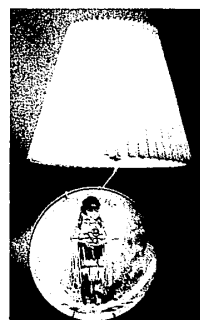
"Be My Friend" is the first in the new series titled "My Memories." It was brought out by Joseph Wedgwood & Sons. It is by Impressionist painter Mary Vickers who has done other plates for the company. Issued at \$27.



"Happy Dreams" by Bessie Pease Gutmann is the first issue of the Magical Moments series. It was issued this year at \$29.95 in the United States, \$45 in Canada.



"The Music Maker" is the fifth issue in the Rockwell Heritage series. An early sellout was predicted. It was available earlier this year for \$24.50, but it may have already gone up in price. The painting of the old seafarer and a young boy has wide appeal.



"Crow Baby" by Penny Ann Cross will probably appreciate dramatically, according to Mrs. Crawford.