

Women at Yale Divinity School

MILESTONES AND RECOLLECTIONS



October 2019

Compiled by Martha Smalley

This is an updated version of the 2010 Divinity Library exhibit "Eight Decades of Women at YDS"

The early years....

Women had an influence at YDS well before they were allowed in as students. There were some notably strong-minded faculty wives such as Delia Lyman Porter. In his work, *Yale and the Ministry*, Roland Bainton wrote that Prof. Porter was “urged to write more by colleagues, students, and not the least by Mrs. Porter, herself so dynamic that there was never a hiatus between the resolve and the result.” Beyond social activities, the “Divinity Dames” also were involved in service work. Mrs. Porter, for example, was instrumental in organizing the Neighborhood House near St. Paul’s Church on Chapel Street.



There were women taking classes at YDS as early as 1907. These women were students in other Yale departments, primarily pursuing Master of Arts degrees.

Louise Triplett is an example of a woman who took several classes at YDS in pursuit of her 1928 Master of Arts degree received from the Yale University Department of Education. She went on to a long career serving as director of religious education in various Congregational churches and associations.



1932

It was a male-dominated world in June 1932 when the Educational Policy Committee voted to recommend to the Yale Corporation that women be admitted to the Bachelor of Divinity program. According to the minutes from that meeting their acceptance was subject to the following conditions:

- 1. That no more than ten women be admitted in any one year.**
- 2. That admissions of women shall be in addition to the present limitation of enrollment.**
- 3. That financial aid shall not be granted them from the present established scholarship fund of the school but that prizes shall be open to them unless otherwise provided by the terms of the gift of any prize.**

In the fall of 1932, four women enrolled at YDS, two in the First Year Class and two coming in as Second Year students due to credits accumulated elsewhere. The school maintained its policy of no more than ten women per class through the 1950s.

Things weren't always easy for the early implementers of the 1930s....



Esther Brown (Hopkins)
Class of '34



Bernice Buehler
Class of '35

Dean Weigle had told me, when I was accepted, that I was the first woman they had admitted and that I'd have some problems to overcome. "We have one or two professors," he said, "who do not believe that women have the mental capacity to do our work." (One of those professors later gave me my only C.) "Several in authority feel sure that women will be disruptive," Dr. Weigle continued, "so I must warn you to leave our men alone."

Thelma Diener Allen, class of 1935

Not always welcome in the academic sphere...

At some point during my first or second year, I learned through Paul Vieth that I had been discussed for thirty minutes in a faculty meeting. Professor Bainton had proposed giving me a church history prize. Some members of the faculty objected on grounds that the donor of the money for the prize had specified that it be given to “the man with the highest grades in church history.” The final decision went against me.

Thelma Diener Allen, class of 1935

Did they treat you differently in the classrooms?

Well...not overtly. But it was subtle and I felt that they just wanted men students. And... the students really had not been prepared either. I had some very good friends among the men students, but in classrooms, there was ... not an ignoring completely, but a ...not welcoming. In fact, I became so shy that I wouldn't even enter into discussions and things in class. Out of class was a different matter.

Winifred Watson Smith, student in 1936

No place to live on campus ...

As I reflect on my time at Yale, I have to begin with the lack of housing for women. During my nine months at Yale, I lived in five different houses...

Anne Strain, class of 1938

There being no accommodations for women at YDS, Laura and I had agreed by correspondence to seek an off-campus rooming arrangement together... From the housing list Laura chose a suitable room with kitchen arrangements on nearby Sheldon Terrace. We thought this was quite luxurious and ate rather well pooling \$5.00 per week in our grocery fund. We never considered invading the Refectory—for, as I remember it now, it seemed so overwhelming—so male, so privileged, and so expensive that it was not for the likes of us. Each morning, we packed our lunches and raced the 7 minute walk to the school—to spend the day, to return for a hastily prepared supper, and then to run back to the library in the evening to study until it closed at 11 p.m.

Jeanne Humphreys Hein, class of 1954

1930s-1950s: living with the status quo

It was indeed a daunting experience to be a woman student at YDS before the 60s. ... Since only ten women were allowed in each of the three classes, we comprised only a small minority in the student body of over 300. There were no women faculty members and few, if any, female administrators.... However, probably most daunting of all, we were taken aside early into Liston Pope's office and told that each of use was taking the place of a man in the student body, and thus we better work hard, serve the church significantly after graduation, and NOT get married. I do not mean to give the impression that women were either ignored or openly oppressed at YDS in the 50s.



In fact, in many ways, I (and probably the other women) felt very lucky to be there. It was a time of great theological ferment and heavy conversations We didn't have the categories at that point saying, "this is a sexist remark, this is a condescending remark" and so forth. In fact, I had the opposite response. I said, "Well, I'm one of those privileged few. I better do something about it." And so I worked very hard and I did well academically.

Ruth Ferguson Hooke, class of 1956

1952 Study on women at YDS

WOMEN AT YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL: 1931 - 1951

A Study by Elizabeth Batchelder
1951-52

For twenty years women have been part of Yale Divinity School in a capacity other than dietician or scrubwoman; they have been regularly enrolled students, just like the men. Or, perhaps this last phrase ought to be qualified, even eliminated. This study is designed to help you, the faculty, decide upon the qualifications of the questioned phrase. It has to do with the first woman student who was told she could not take public speaking because she might distract the men, and the present women students who sometimes complain that they can't distract the men sufficiently.

*In 1932 women were admitted as candidates for the B.D. degree.... Twenty years later, in 1952, a study of the two hundred fifty-two women who had been enrolled disclosed that **only 36 per cent had obtained their degrees. Marriage accounted for 40 per cent of the withdrawals. In academic performance the women are above the average of the school.** They are harder to place in field work, earn less and make a greater demand on the scholarship funds of the school. They put their training to good use as ministers' wives, directors of religious education, and teachers of religion in colleges and on the mission field.*

*Roland Bainton in **Yale and the Ministry** (1957)*

From the 1952 study:

Major Field of Study of All
B.D. Women

<u>Field of Study</u>	<u>Number of Women</u>	
	<u>Graduates</u>	<u>Non-graduates</u>
Religious Education	31	41
Student Work	9	14
Missions	4	18
Community Service	10	8
Teaching and Research	10	5
Pastoral Ministry	1	2
No record	<hr/>	<hr/> 18
Totals	65	106

The 1952 Batchelder study identified three main problems for women at YDS:

*First, the problem of the emotional adjustment to an all male environment is more difficult for the women than is the adjustment of the men to the fact of the sparse female campus population. **Vocational decision** is sharply challenged for many women who face at the Divinity School for the first time the possibility of **marriage** as an alternative choice to 'Christian vocation'....*

*A second point at which I feel the women are at a distinct disadvantage is in **housing**. Privacy for study is essential at the graduate level, yet fellowship is desired. Because there is such a small female community, the personal problems and antagonisms are magnified in close quarters. Ideal would be a dormitory with private sleeping and study rooms, adequate social rooms, and space enough for more women.*

*A third problem area is that of **field work**, and this has been stressed by many respondents. **Significant and relevant jobs for women are hard to find, and this is a constant problem for professional women, even after school** – witness the fact that one woman was turned out of two jobs because a man, less highly trained than she, was available.*

1950s-1960s: Things begin to change under Dean Liston Pope



After graduation in 1954 I took a job as Dean Pope's secretary. Ever a sensitive social liberal, he always seemed somewhat uneasy because I as a YDS graduate was doing secretarial work. So he expanded my job as he could beyond the usual secretarial work—but, as he would tell me—there was no way within the limits of the system that existed within the university that he could elevate me to a job commensurate with my education and experience. One day, he burst into the office and triumphantly announced he had gotten me the title of "Advisor to Women Students." I was astonished because we had never even discussed it. Women, by that time, of course were beginning to occupy a more prominent role at YDS.... Dean Pope had simply convinced the Provost that women were now very much part of his concern as dean and he needed help. To me he also admitted it was the only way he could elevate my pay scale, a matter that genuinely concerned him.

Jeanne Humphreys Hein, class of 1954

In 1952 Dean Liston Pope appointed a “Committee on Program for Women Students” to address the needs exposed by the Batchelder report:

On January 20, 1953, this committee reported that it had given consideration to the various problems which are peculiar to women students, such as

- 1. The difficulty experienced by women students to earn sufficient self-support.**
- 2. The difficulty experienced by women in getting religious field work related to the profession for which they are preparing.**
- 3. Dissatisfaction with residence facilities for women students.**
- 4. The comparatively small number of women students who follow through the three-year course to the B.D. degree.**

Partly in response to the Committee’s report, in 1953 a two-year Masters in Religious Education degree was introduced at YDS.

The population of women at YDS very gradually became more diverse.



1945: Rena Weller Karefa-Smart was the first black woman to receive a B.D. from YDS



1950: Caroline Chen was the first Asian woman to graduate



1953: Ana Ines Braulio was the first Latina graduate

On-campus housing!

Housing, a major problem for women in the early decades, was addressed in 1957 by the opening of Porter Hall as a women's residential hall. Until its destruction in the summer of 2002, Porter Hall was located behind the back parking lot, on the hill leading down to St. Ronan Street.





By 1965, 45 women were listed in the YDS student directory. The directory also had six pages of photos of student wives.

STUDENTS' WIVES



Mary
Abel



Inge
Ameer



Janet
Anderson



Patricia
Anderson



Paula
Backscheider



Rita
Baldrige



Martha
Beauchamp



Bess
Bently



Margaret
Billman



Mary Sue
Brown



Lucy
Callender



Theresa
Camins



Katherine
Campbell



Georgia
Childress



Karen
Childs



Jeanette
Cliff



Diane
Corry



Edna
Crocker



Heather
Dalzell



Joan
D'Aoust

1970s: Revolution!

The “Times They Were A-Changin’” in the 1960s and early 1970s as civil rights and Vietnam War protests engaged students throughout the country. The idea of co-education at Yale College was broached in the late 1960s. No longer content with the status quo, women at YDS revolted!

Yale Daily News
April 1970

Divinity School *Girls Occupy John*

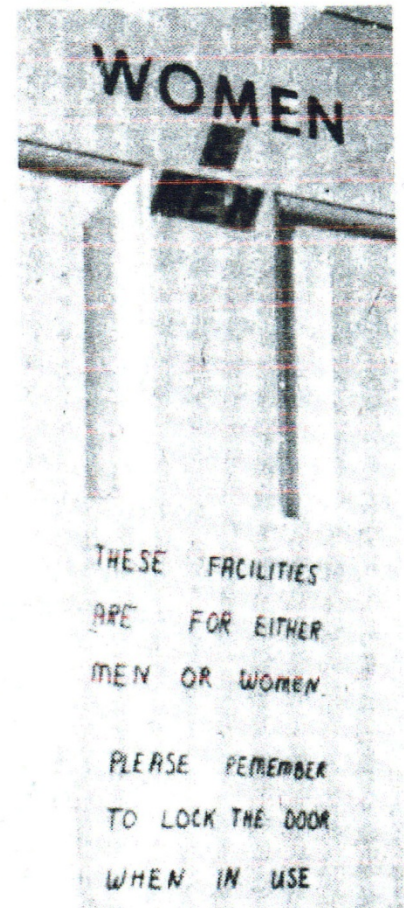
The battlefield in the war between the sexes has been extended from the cloisters of Mory's to a john in the Yale Divinity School.

As of last Thursday the school is on record as having the first men's room in the nation to be “liberated” by women's rights activists.

A small but determined group of women occupied the men's lavatory outside the library at about 10 in the morning and monopolized the facility for the day.

The motivation was not entirely political. The women had been planning their “symbolic action” for about a week and a half because they objected to the three flights of stairs they had to travel from the study area of the library to the nearest ladies' room.

The women suffered only one counter-attack when a man stomped into the rest room, washed his hands in sullen defiance, and strode out



Recollections of the liberation of the men's room



This particular incident has to do with consciousness raising, an important part of one's experience as a student. Women students were sufficient in number by then at Y.D.S. that we all together noticed that we all were having similar problems. At the Divinity School, there were no restroom facilities accessible to women in the Library without going a fair distance. If you were working in your carrel in the Library, you had a long way to go before you found a restroom. There was in the basement of the Library at the time, where many of the carrels were, a men's restroom. So a group of us decided to liberate it, to either make it a restroom for women, or, at least one that could be used by both women and men. Everybody was used to the kinds of demonstrations that included sit-ins, so we had a sit-in the bathroom in the basement of the Library.... The Dean was Colin Williams, and he came with a white flag of sorts, surrendering, so we could have a bathroom.... It raised a lot of consciousness around the Divinity School.

Margaret Farley, Ph.D student at the time

★★★★★★★★★★ Liberation of the ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★ Yale Divinity School Library Men's Room

CAROL P. CHRIST

At 10:15 on a Thursday morning a contingent of about ten graduate student women walked past the bleary-eyed men students gathered for ritual pipe-smoking and gossip in the library lounge, tacked the letters "WO" on the door of the men's room, claimed possession by placing a bouquet of plastic flowers in the urinal, and sat down. So began the historic "Liberation of the Washroom" at Yale Divinity School. The pipe-smokers awakened as they read the manifesto posted on the wall of the lounge announcing that the Babylonian Captivity* of the facility had come to an end. The women would occupy the washroom for a number of years equal to the number the men had held it, and then it would revert to joint use.

Did the men realize the hardship they would now be forced to suffer? How many times had they smirked in superiority as they watched women colleagues run three flights of stairs separating the women's room from the library lounge, the biblical reference room, the stacks, and the study cubicles? Did they perhaps imagine unknown terrors of silent humiliation when, after spending hours engrossed in an arcane text, and just having discovered the key to some ancient mystery, they would have to answer nature's call with a

Late in the afternoon, just as the women inside were becoming bored with the escapade, the Dean of Yale Divinity School, sporting a white flag and bearing a peace treaty, rushed down the stairs of the library. The treaty was slipped under the door. Inside, the women noted that he gave official deanly approval to the principle of integration, couched in the liberal Christian language of "common use." He requested only that the users of the room lock the door while inside.

Although the terms did not meet their claim to just retribution for years of humiliation and outrage, the tired women reluctantly accepted the peace treaty. One of them placed the letters "Women and" on the door, and they left. Later they billed the Divinity School \$1.53 for the lock. They received prompt recompense from the Dean's "indiscretionary" fund.

To this day the coveted washroom remains integrated. Word has it that the decal letters left by the women have been replaced by an official paint job. The occupation was recorded for posterity on the front page of the *New Haven Journal-Courier*, April 10, 1970, and later in *The New York Times*. Women participating in the action included Carol P. Christ, Francine Cardman, Marilyn Collins, Mary Rose D'Angelo, Margaret Farley, Kit Havice, Margaret O'Gara, Judith Plaskow, and Ann Vater.

1971: Progress

In 1971, Joan Bates Forsberg became Advocate for Women and Registrar. Her work description:

- Carry out the registrar's administrative duties
- Counsel -- personal, vocational, spiritual
- Teach course in Women and Ministry
- Participate in school's liturgical life
- Direct program for women.

She was soon promoted to Assistant Dean and then to Associate Dean for Student Life.



Detra MacDougall recalled in 1976:

Having worked in the Registrar's Office since 1963, I have seen several changes take place at the Divinity School regarding the enrollment of women. The most visible change is the number of women enrolled. When I first arrived on the scene, the average number of women enrolled was 37 out of an average number in the student body of 321.... In 1971 the Registrar position was available and a few powerful political women started negotiations with the Dean to hire a woman who would help minister to the specific needs of women. With their combined efforts such a person was hired. [Joan Bates Forsberg]

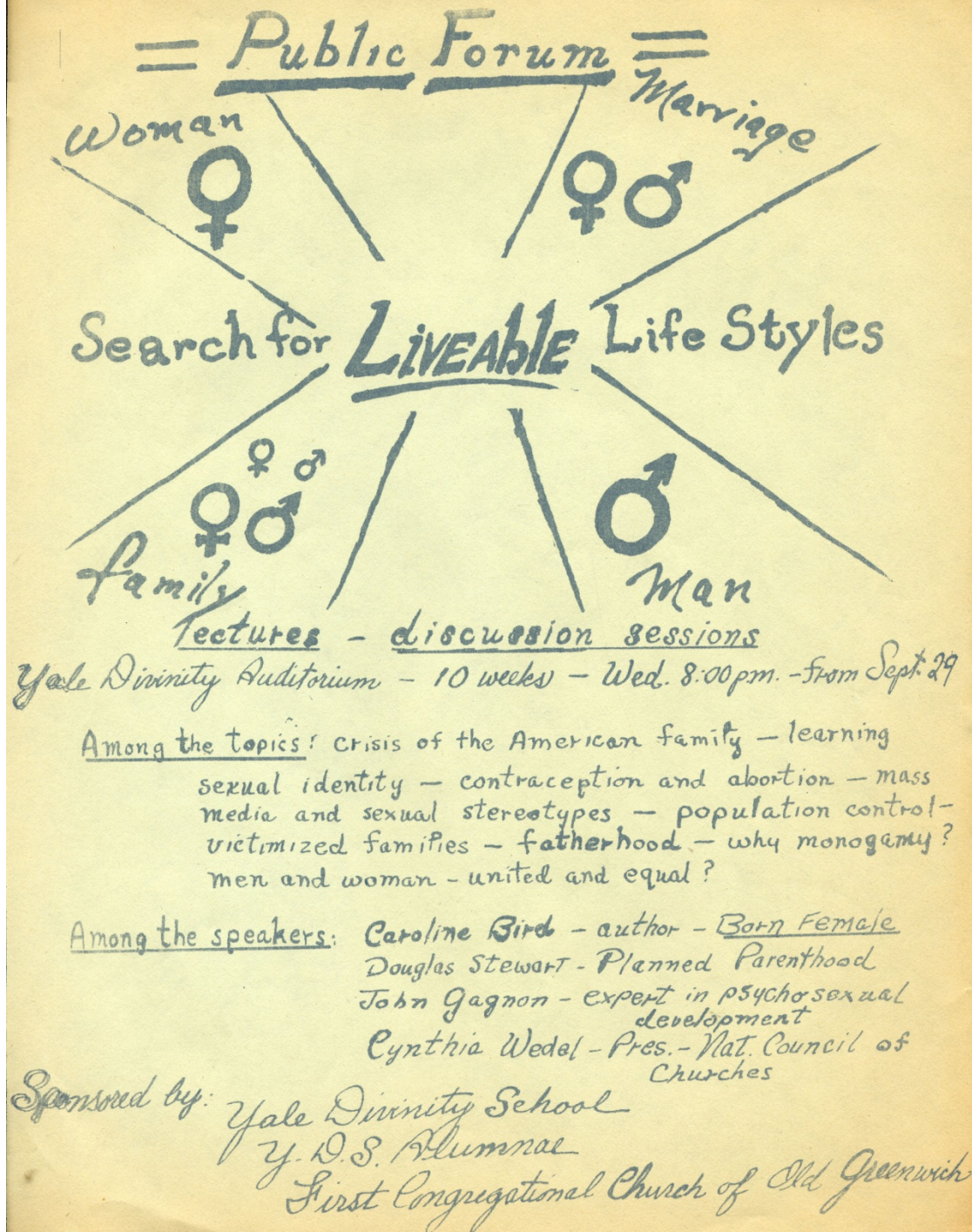


The Women's Center was formed under Forsberg's leadership:

[The women students] all helped me decide that we needed a space on campus for women to meet. There needed to be something like a Women's Center.... I think it started in terms of thinking about needing a room where women could come, if they wanted to come to talk with me, or if they wanted counseling, I can see the day as clearly as if it were yesterday. I was sitting in my office and a couple of the other women were here in the room with me. Raymond Wood was the Facilities and Business Manager of the School, and his office was across the hall.... The women and I had decided that I would go and ask Mr. Wood for a room where I could meet with women when they came for counseling.... I stepped out of my office, half way across the hall, and the women in the office behind me suddenly said, "Ask for a suite. Ask for a suite".....



A "Liveable Life Styles" seminar was held in 1971. Guest lecturers were brought in for the series, which could be taken for credit.



Women's Lib No Hula Hoop; It's Here To Stay!

By ELIZABETH G. CURREN
Register Staff Reporter

For all those male chauvinists who think Women's Liberation has peaked, Caroline Bird, author of *Born Female*, has an emphatic no! Anything but.

"Many think it's a fad—that it's peaked — like hula hoops. But my mail says it hasn't," Miss Bird spoke Wednesday night to an overflow audience in Yale Divinity School's Marquand Chapel. Interest in the best selling author ran high. Her lecture was slated for the Divinity School's auditorium — which seats 200. The scene, however, quickly shifted to Marquand chapel which also overflowed its 350 seating capacity.

The movement is getting into new places. Recruiting new kinds of women. "It's in Bible-belt colleges. There is a women's caucus in every professional organization. Even housewives are organizing conscious raising groups."

First In Series

Miss Bird's talk on "Why Women's Liberation Now?" kicked off the first in a series of eight lectures sponsored by the Yale Divinity School Alumnae Council. The free weekly series on "A Search for Liveable Life Styles" will bring top speakers from diverse professions to the divinity school campus. The First Congregational Church of Old Greenwich is funding the forum.

"Consciousness raising," Miss Bird explained, "is one of those technological devices which travels from one culture to another. The Communists did

than we realize. Five years ago women thought they had equality. I thought I had it. That was before I took an assignment with *Saturday Evening Post* exploring the silly old idea that women were kept down at work. I discovered that I was a victim of this discrimination too."

Former Newsweek Staffer

Miss Bird, a former staffer for *Newsweek* and *Fortune* magazines, is now consulting editor for *New Woman* which ran its first issue in June.

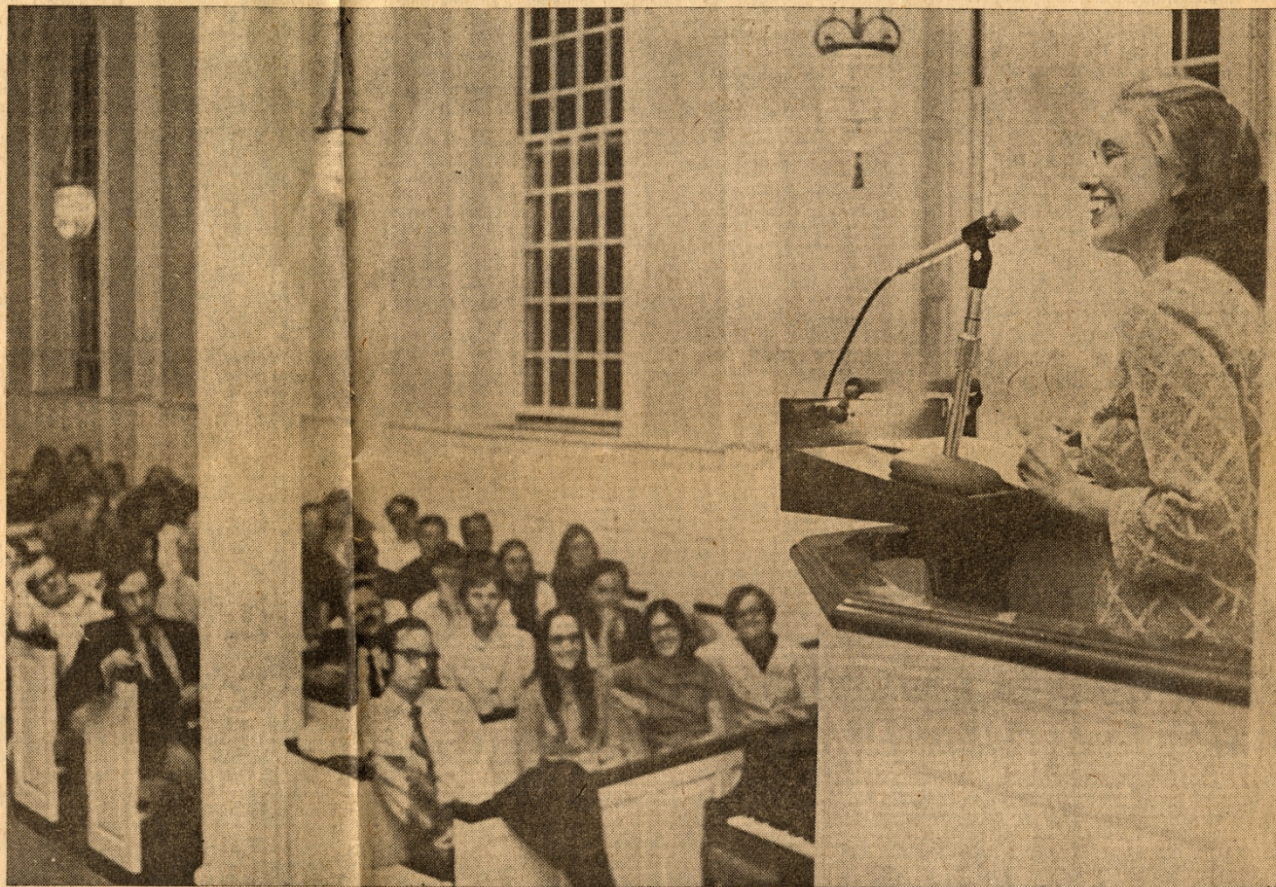
Caroline Bird tosses her mixed grey shoulder-length bob back in a quick little jerk when she talks about *New Woman*. "Margaret Harold, a Floridian, is the editor and publisher. She's put a great deal of her money into this thing to give attention to the life styles of independent women that the media just seems to overlook." Circulation is now up to 400,000.

"I reported the *Saturday Evening Post* with more indignation than grace. They turned the article down. I had to write 'Born Female' to get the story in print.

"Today," she beamed "the *Saturday Evening Post* is out of business. 'Born Female' is now in its second edition.

Nobody thought feminism would sell. "True there was Betty Friedan's best selling *Feminine Mystique*—but the word for Betty in those days—and I quote," she quickly added, "was 'sarill'."

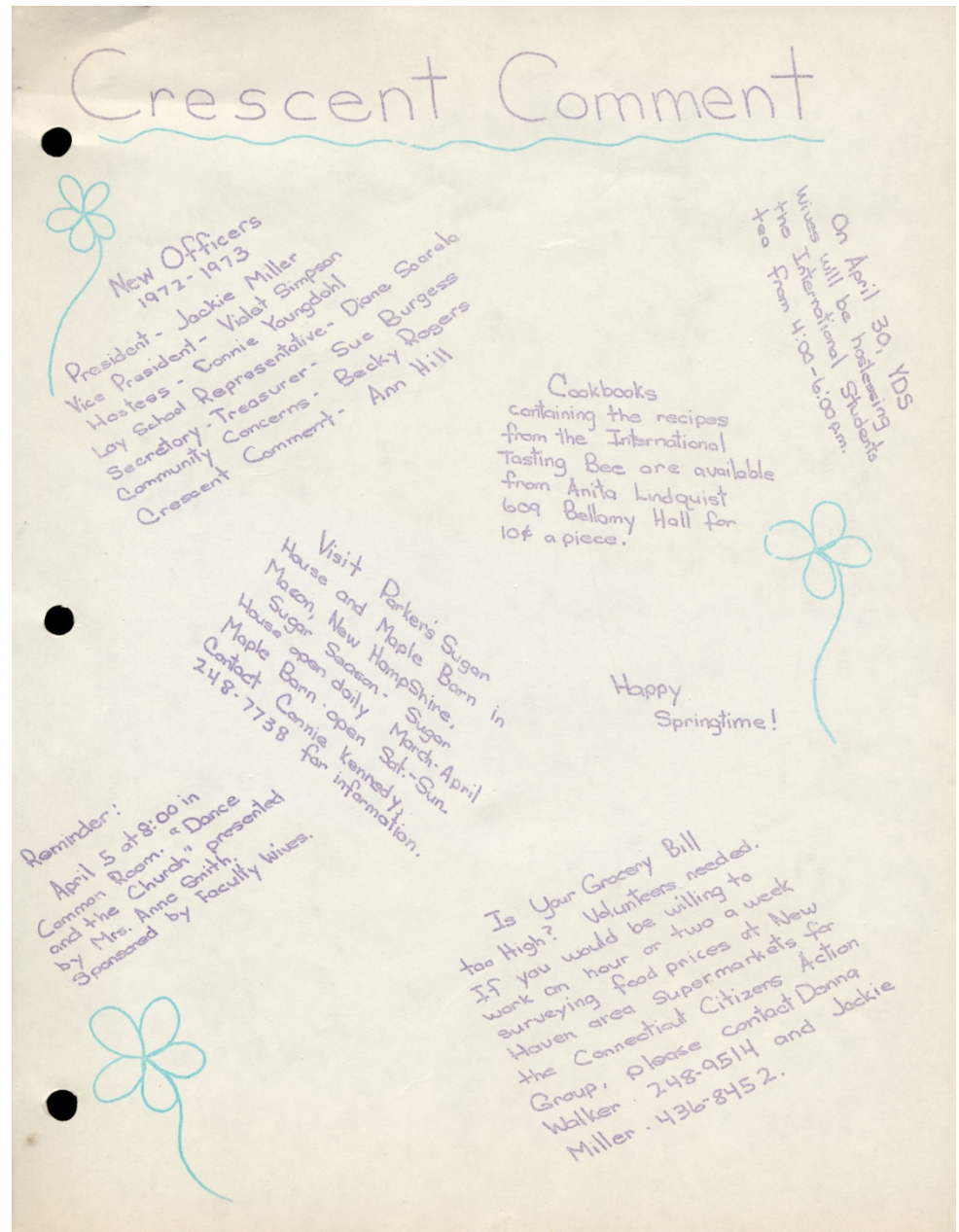
Successful women were not complaining out loud. "They simply said that in order to get ahead a woman had to be twice



Register Photos By Lorenza Funn

A mingling of modes....

At the same time that women were asserting themselves as students at YDS, other women on campus remained in the traditional Divinity wives mode, joining together in activities of the "Crescent Community."



1970s: Women join the faculty



While a few women had been on the faculty earlier as part time or temporary staff, such as Iris Cully who was hired as Associate Professor of Religious Education in 1965, Margaret Farley was the first tenure-track woman faculty member at YDS. She was hired as Lecturer in Christian Ethics in 1971, became Assistant Professor in 1972, Associate Professor in 1974, and Professor in 1984.

Letty Russell joined the faculty of Yale Divinity School in 1974 as an Assistant Professor of theology and rose to the rank of Professor in 1985.



Barbara Hargrove was Associate
Professor of the Sociology of Religion,
1975-1978



Bonnie Kittel joined the
faculty in the late
1970s.

YDS women took the lead in organizing inter-seminary conferences for women in the 1970s

Dear Sister Seminarians and Faculty;

Each year the number of women enrolled in divinity schools increases, and as a result new issues become apparent. Not only are we faced with the practical problems of admissions, but theological controversies loom large, including such concerns as the varieties of ministry for women, the shape of a feminist theology, the under-representation of women on seminary faculties, and the subtle pressures which result from our being a minority group on campus.

Many of the women at Yale Divinity School feel that the issues named above could be better suffered and understood through the sharing of ideas, differing experiences and a common sense of sisterhood. We now invite you to a Women's Inter-Seminary Conference to be held February 16-18, 1973 at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut.

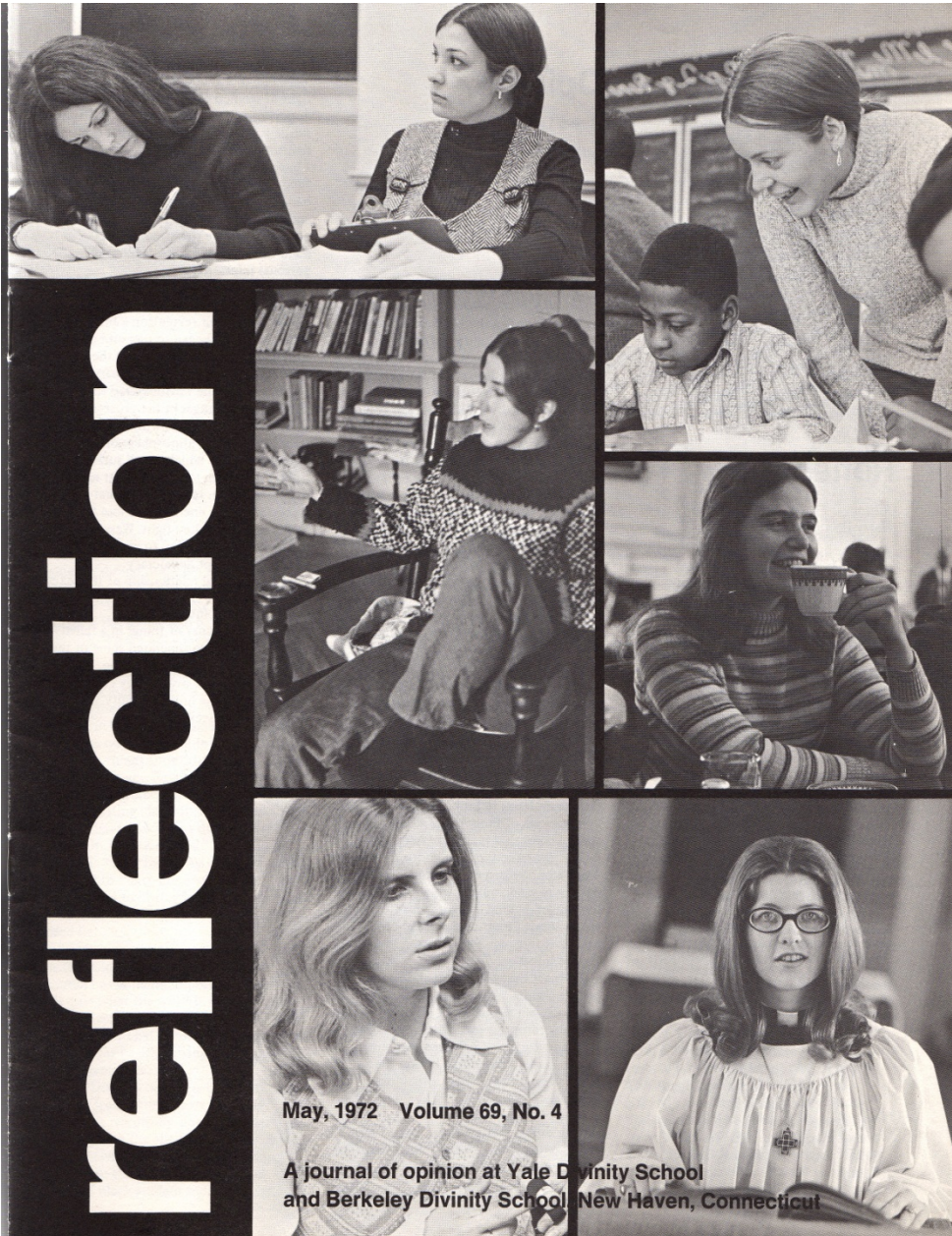
We hope to find you and other women from seminaries all along the North and South East with us that weekend, pooling resources (have you developed any liturgies you would like to share?), establishing a network of communication and cross-fertilization. Please return the questionnaire below before November 1, adding any ideas or suggestions you feel pressing.

In freedom,

The Conference Committee
% Carol Adams
Box 1, Yale Divinity School
409 Prospect Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510

In 1973 and again in 1977, the Women's Inter-seminary Conferences hosted by YDS drew women from seminaries across the U.S.

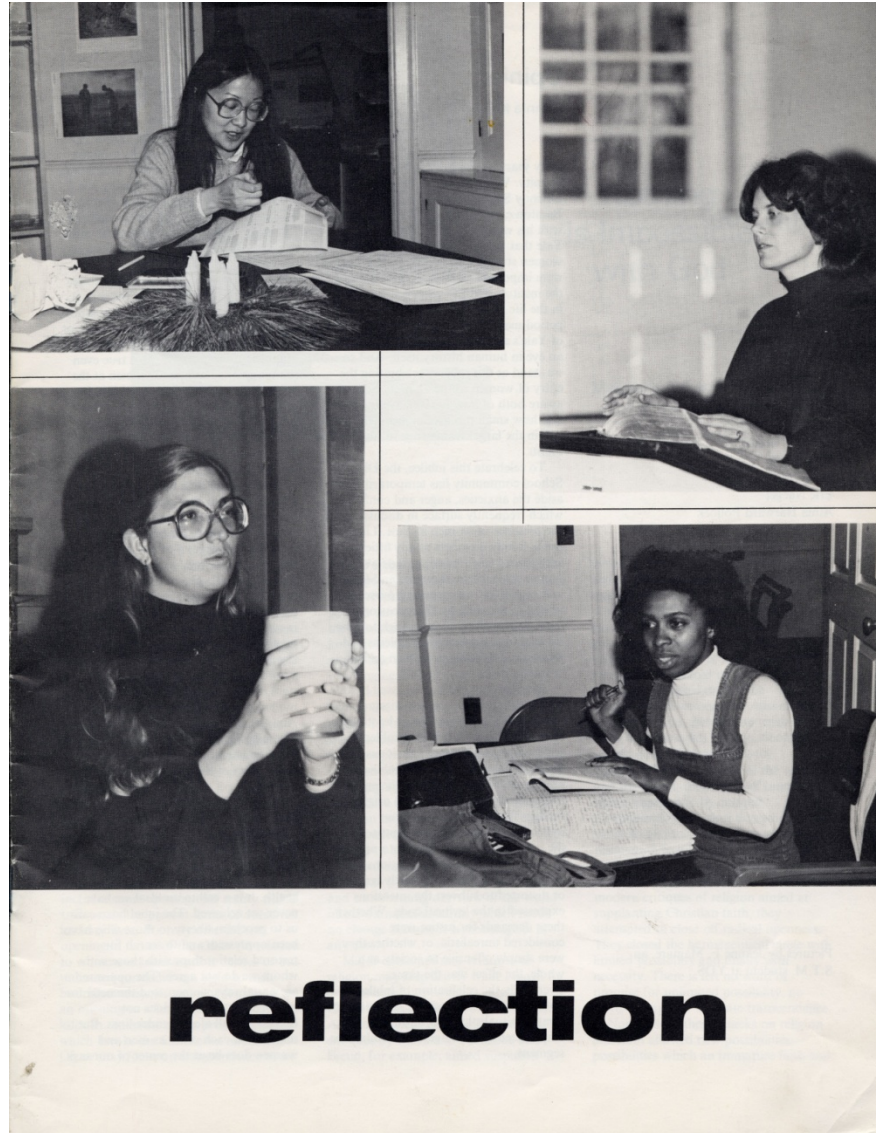




The May 1972 issue of Reflection was the first to focus on women at YDS.

By 1979 when Leander Keck became Dean, it was reported that over the past 10 years enrollment of women had risen from 30 to 190.

The January 1982 issue of *Reflection* celebrated fifty years of women at YDS.



A Jubilee celebration commemorated fifty years of women at YDS

Jubilee



celebration

As we gather for the Jubilee Celebration of the admittance of women to YDS, we come with our own individual memories of life at YDS, some pleasant, some not so pleasant. Some remember living off campus when there were no women living on campus. Others remember 301 Prospect St. and evening escorts. Others remember Porter Hall. Still others remember Co-ed dorms. What about the days when you were the only woman in the class? Or when you were accused of being at Divinity School only to find a husband? Or when your financial aid was cut because you got married?

The atmosphere had changed....



I chose YDS over several other seminaries because I understood that it was open to women, had a growing consciousness among students and faculty, and was a place where I could wrestle with the problems women face and develop the gifts we have to give in ministry. I have not been disappointed.

*Gail Unterberger, M.Div. 3rd year
Bryon, Texas*

I am excited and encouraged by the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ages of women at YDS. The increasing number of women students is only a first step towards the inclusion of "all God's children" in the life of the school and the ministry. We also need to make certain that the whole community is included in the words and thought patterns of our songs and worship. "The brotherhood of man" or "the sons of God" may be traditional terms for the community of God, but they also exclude over one half of that community.

*Talitha Arnold, M.Div. 1st year
Tempe, Arizona*

Slowly, but surely, more women joined the faculty at YDS in the 1980s-1990s:



Serene Jones



Susan Garrett



Shawn Copeland



Katherine Gill



Marilyn McCord Adams



Kristen Leslie

Ellen Davis,
Lee McGee
& others....

Margot Fassler was Director of the Institute of Sacred Music and Tangeman Professor of Music History from 1994-2004



From 1996 to 1999 Margaret Farley and other women at YDS were important leaders in the Foundation for the Preservation of Sterling Divinity Quadrangle – the “Save the Quad” movement that was instrumental in YDS remaining in its current location on Prospect Street.



In 2001 Rebecca Chopp was appointed
Dean of the Divinity School.



She left YDS in 2002 to
become President of
Colgate University.

In 2001 the Women's Initiative: Gender, Faith, and Responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa was established by YDS women faculty and YDS students from Africa, partnering with the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.



In 2008, Emilie Townes became the first woman and the first African American to serve as YDS's Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.



Emilie Townes

By 2010 women comprised 50% of the student body and close to 40% of the faculty.



In 2019 the YDS tenure-track faculty is, for the first time, more than 50 percent women.

In September 2019 Sarah Birmingham Drummond was installed as Founding Dean of Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School



2019: celebrating women who teach at YDS

