

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Downtrodden Here, Too

We came across an article in the Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin which we enjoyed to the utmost with some vanity and we hope that our readers will also appreciate, especially our female readers, for it is certainly pointed to their interests.

So today we dedicate this diary to the women and borrow from Marjorie R. Longwell her column "Can We Turn Back The Clock?":

"While our founding fathers were drawing up a code of laws in Philadelphia, one of them received a letter from his wife. It said, in part:

My Dear John:

By the way, in the new code of laws I desire you remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than were their ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power in the hands of husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. Your loving wife. Abigail.

"John Adams whimsical answer contained this sentence: 'Depend upon it, my dear wife, we men know better than to repeal our masculine systems.

"More than a century later our Supreme Court decided that the Constitution, written by, for, and of the MEN, left women out entirely. In 1920, however, thanks to the work of Susan B. Anthony and others, women did obtain, through the 19th Amendment, the constitutional right to cast a ballot.

"But even today, according to Supreme Court rulings, women possess just that ONE constitutional right, and in all other respects live legally under state laws.

"The Supreme Court has many times decreed that our Founding Fathers intended to bequeath this legal handicap to their great, great, great granddaughters. We are not certain that they did. But in any case, we must be careful not to do our Founding Father an injustice, for their world was not ours. Their way of life no more resembled ours than an oxcart a rocket ship.

"In 1789 woman, spinning and weaving by candlelight, cooking at an open hearth, making clothes for all 14 of her children, could scarcely read or write. Her daughters attending a hickory stick school, were not allowed to

learn long division; that higher mathematical skill was reserved for boys.

"Many daily needs were women-supplied in 1789, demanding her homage every waking hour. Did the family require a new blanket? She wove it. Did a child's aching tooth need attention? She rode him on horseback to a doctor and watched that good man turn dentist by dint of a pair of pliers. Did a neighbor's illness demand expert nursing? She willingly shouldered this duty, too.

"Small wonder that our Founding Mothers, fenced in by stern tradition, seldom took time to place a ladder against a wall and climb for a glimpse beyond. Abigail Adams did, of course; but her loving husband, with amused solicitude, lifted her gently down.

"To the 1789 woman, gazing out her curtained window at horse drawn carriages on cobbled streets, our modern world would have seemed more improbable than Gulliver's tallest tale. How could she imagine 22 million women marching each morning to salaried jobs outside the home? How could she visualize women attending colleges, becoming lawyers, doctors, scientists? How could she know that women, someday, would drive their own cars, fly their own planes, run for mayor of a city?

"Millions of women are working for a constitutional amendment that would afford them 100 per cent protection in that great document. More than half the members of the House of Representatives and many United States senators have indicated support of this proposed amendment, and the platforms of both political parties, since 1944. have contained an Equal Rights Plank.

"Recently President Eisenhower said: "We shall seek, as we promised in our platform, to assure women everywhere in our land equality of rights."

"Susan B. Anthony, in her first speech, said: 'There is not a right or privilege in justice according to man that I would have denied to woman.'"