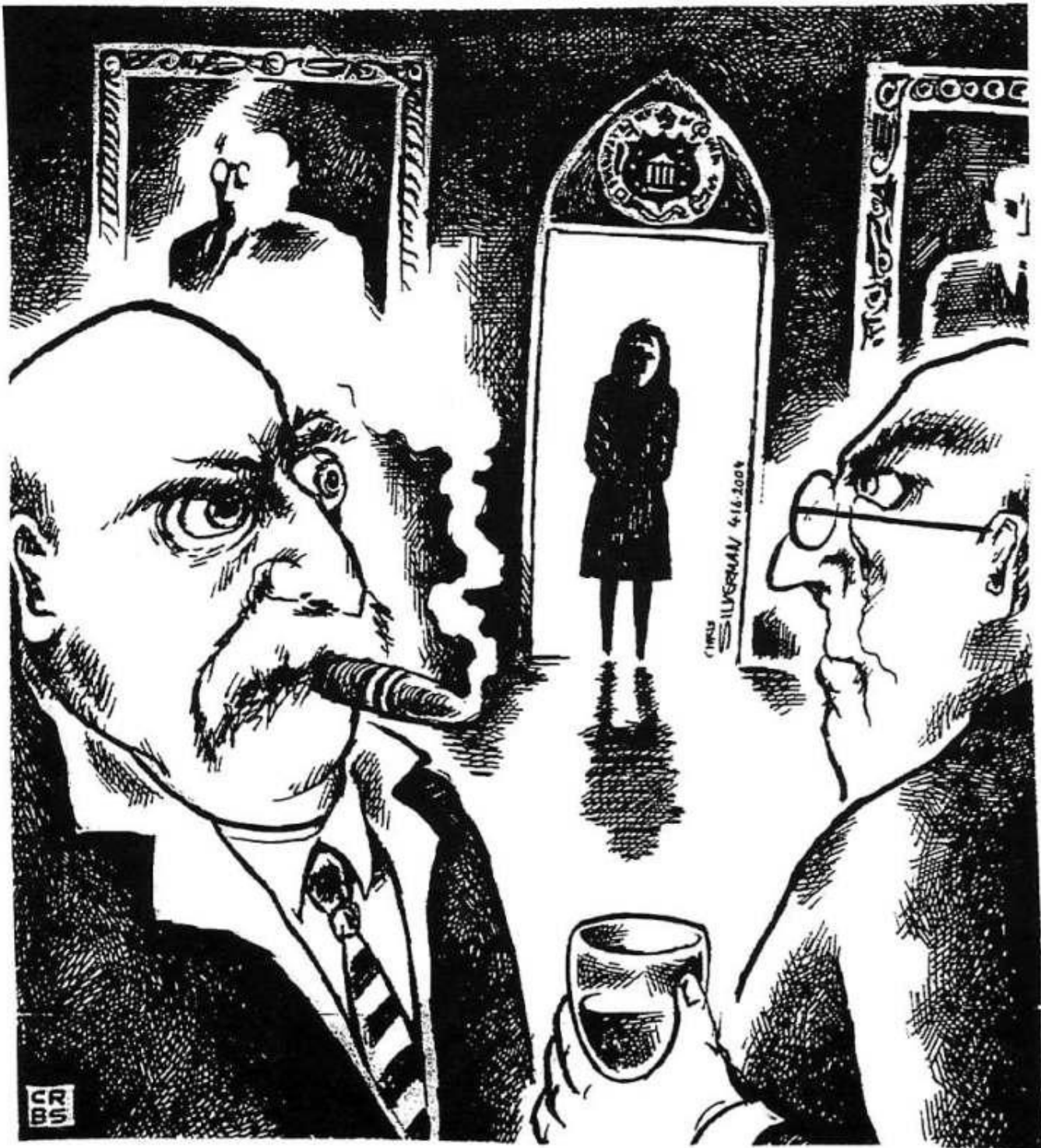


Feminist Scholarship Review

Male Privilege at Trinity College



Trinity College Women's Center
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Feminist Scholarship Review

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When we first sat down and began this year's Feminist Scholarship Review, the idea of exploring male privilege at Trinity seemed both intriguing and overwhelming. While we were incredibly interested in the subject material, it's fair to say that it intimidated us. It was different from other themes that we had pursued in the past, and we feared that the potential breadth of the topic would prevent a sense of cohesion between the individual pieces in this Review. We were also well aware that the topic is a sensitive one: women might be afraid to be open with their thoughts on the matter, and men might be defensive. We couldn't have been more wrong. We were received warmly from all the faculty members that we contacted. People seemed eager to contribute, and even those who couldn't contribute (due to lack of time and other projects) expressed their regret at not being able to share their own personal stories.

While we acknowledge that the three women whose pieces are enclosed in this volume can in no way capture the variety of experiences concerning Trinity's change from being a male to a co-educational institution, we believe that they do give valuable and important insight into a marginalized issue. Beth Miller, in an excerpt of her graduate thesis (2003) "What Do You Mean I Didn't Always Belong? Coeducation at Trinity" explores Trinity's process of becoming a co-educational institution. She provides invaluable information about the history of Trinity, and how the Civil Rights Movement and Title IX affected women's status at Trinity College. Robin Sheppard, in her article "Playing Fair and Keeping Score," also talks about Title IX, but in a very different context; she discusses its importance in terms of sports, and the changing roles of women in athletics since her arrival at the college in 1974. She offers a firsthand account of her own struggles to run an athletics program that provides equal opportunities for both men and women. Dori Katz, in her piece "A Co-Ed Professor," also offers us insight into her own personal struggle; she was one of the first female professors to teach at Trinity College in 1969. She discusses the ways this made her feel more like a "guest" than as a "member" of the Trinity College community, and how these feelings developed and changed throughout her years here.

As senior women swiftly approaching graduation, we have found this project particularly rewarding. It has helped us understand our place as women struggling for gender equality at Trinity College. We are extremely proud of this compilation of essays, and we encourage women and men, students, faculty, staff and administrators alike to read and think about the material enclosed in this booklet. As members of the same college community, it is important for all of us to both embrace and understand our college's history.

Nicole Riendeau and Jillian Rutman

What Do You Mean I Didn't Always Belong?
Coeducation at Trinity College
Excerpted from Beth Miller's M.A. Thesis, 2003

It never occurred to me that Trinity College had not always admitted women students. Sometimes I forget that institutions excluded women, and this forgetting concerned me. Not realizing that Trinity was an all-male institution during my lifetime also intrigued me because I always took for granted that I belonged here as a student; that I had always belonged here as a student. But this was not so for two reasons: I am female and my family is not rich.

As a woman from a working class family, it has been satisfying to pour over *Trustee Minutes* and scrutinize their discussions about coeducation. I wonder if these trustees ever imagined someone like me would read the decisions they made behind closed doors? I came to this project knowing about the discrimination women suffered during the 1970s in male-dominated environments and also knowing that many women and men have always recognized women as human beings with civil rights even before the law or society required them to. The details of Trinity's transition from single-sex to coeducational institution reveal crisis points that emerged over gender and the evolution of a feminist consciousness here, whether people liked it or not.

Quietly, and with a sense of adventure, the first women students came to Trinity College in September 1969. Their presence, however, did not instantly transform Trinity into a coeducational institution because the College and the nation had yet to understand how to regard women as equals to men. Admitting women students at this time was a strategic response to an alarming drop in applications from 1966-1968. In 1966, 1,908 men applied to Trinity. In 1967, the number of applications dropped to 1,700, and in 1968, they dropped again to 1,506.¹ The Trinity administration became alarmed that 402 fewer men applied to the College over the course of two years. Other single-sex liberal arts institutions of higher learning also experienced a precipitous drop in applications, and one, Princeton University, tried to find out why. According to the Princeton report on coeducation, entitled "The Education of Women at Princeton," male high school students preferred coeducational institutions to single-sex institutions because they wanted a college social life that included women. Trinity College was one of the many institutions that studied the "Princeton Report" for answers to their admissions problem. The answer to ensuring a satisfactory social life for male applicants, complete with women, was coeducation.

Coeducation at Trinity was not for women; it was for men. Educating women at elite liberal arts colleges because they deserved equal opportunity was not the point of implementing coeducation from 1968-1975. These schools were not responding to pressure from the budding Women's Liberation Movement, to women picketing on the fringes of their campuses, or to trustees insisting their daughters got a chance to attend their alma mater. These schools responded to their potential male applicants' desire to have a readily available source of women on campus.

¹"Selected Admissions Statistics," collated by John Waggett. Held in the Trinity College Archives, Hartford, CT.

The 1970s in America boiled with internal strife, external conflict, and cataclysmic changes in national identity. This national unrest grew out of forced awareness resulting in part from the Civil Rights Movement and protest against the Vietnam War. As men governed this cultural unrest, women began to recognize how they were limited by gender stereotypes and gender discrimination. Women activists at this time were invisible within these movements because men claimed their assumed right to power in national politics and activism.² While men gave speeches to crowds, women served as secretaries making photocopies and coffee. These national events assumed primacy over women's rights because people did not yet see women's rights as particularly important compared to racism or war. When women began to notice the hypocrisy of sexism within the fight to end racism and war, the Women's Liberation Movement (followed by Second Wave Feminism) evolved during the 1970s and borrowed philosophies fostered in these movements. Thus, the 1960s-1970s became a revolutionary era that redefined American culture racially, politically, and eventually along gender lines.

Like the rest of the nation, Trinity students, faculty, and administrators slowly achieved a feminist consciousness during the 1970s. Changes that welcomed women as members of the campus community evolved during this era as more female students and faculty arrived and as they created support groups and facilities like the Women's Center (1977). National legislation like Title IX adopted in 1972 asserted women's right to equal educational opportunity and sports involvement. Title IX and larger societal changes unraveled the fabric of presumed gender roles and buoyed the endeavors of women students, faculty, and administrators at the College. As more women protested sexism in America's cultural, occupational, political, and educational institutions, more members of the Trinity community, most often female faculty, also began to protest sexual discrimination in at Trinity College. The changing social climate beyond and within Trinity's borders made women visible as students, not just useful as enticements for male applicants.

Today, women at Trinity enjoy access and encouragement in all academic disciplines and excel in intercollegiate sports. The social environment for women, though improving, is still dominated by fraternities, who, until recently, discriminated on the basis of gender. Trinity's trustees have thwarted repeated faculty efforts to close fraternities; many trustees who have served the College over the past 30 years were fraternity members.

According to Miller Brown, Dean of Faculty, the last best chance to close fraternities was during the late 1960s and early 1970s when anti-fraternity sentiment was at its height because of the social consciousness and anti-establishment mood of the era:

"The College should have done it; nobody had the nerve to do it. We didn't have the kind of leadership that would have said, 'Let's do it.' The fraternities were collapsing in the 70s; they went from like 16 to 5.... It was such a great opportunity. What the College should have done: just get rid of all of them, confiscate the property, or buy it out, and make other arrangements for the social

² Women have always participated in American wars but their efforts and sacrifices still go largely unacknowledged.

life of the students. It would have cost a lot of money, but it would have begun to reshape the social and intellectual life if the College.”³

The negative connection between fraternities and the social environment at Trinity reemerges every decade. During the late 1960s, fraternities were condemned as racist and classist secret societies. As the 1970s progressed, fraternities were additionally condemned for discriminating on the basis of gender. While all other institutions within the campus community have had to evolve socially to rectify race, class, and sex discrimination, as of this writing in 2003, the fraternities have not because the most moneyed and influential alumni ensure their survival. As the College nears its 35th anniversary of coeducation, yet another review of the value of the fraternity system is underway.

Ultimately, the decision to accept women students significantly changed Trinity College more than students, administrators, and faculty expected. Quietly and happily, the first women students came to Trinity, did their work, and graduated. As more young women enrolled at Trinity along with men, the environment began to change. Women began to make more demands on the College with regard to facilities, services, curriculum, sports, and social life. This change in attitude occurred in tandem with feminist social currents that encouraged women to demand their civil rights and protest gender discrimination and gender stereotypes. Trinity did not always admit women students, but today women study, compete, and discover themselves confident in the knowledge that this College belongs to them too.

³ Miller Brown, Personal Interview, 31 October 2002.

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Playing Fair and Keeping Score

Robin Sheppard

"Play fair," my mom would yell as I headed out to the empty neighborhood lot to play ball with my friends. "Only if you play fair," I would caution my grandmother when she challenged me to a game of Scrabble. For me, growing up in the 1950's and 60's, playing fair was the golden rule of sport and it was accepted as simply the right thing to do without deception or exception. This golden rule was made formal by the passage of legislation in 1972. Title IX, a civil rights law, was part of the Education Amendments to ensure that everyone plays fair; public, private, and parochial schools, from elementary to college and university levels:

"No person in the United States shall, on the bases of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

In 1969, just a few years before Title IX, Trinity made a deliberate approach towards coeducation and it literally changed the face of our institution. This decision and rapid transition to admit women forced the athletic department to come up with some creative initiatives. Unlike other areas of our campus, going "co-ed" in the athletic arena meant implementing new programs and expanding facilities to accommodate female athletes.

By the time I arrived in 1974, everyone on campus had chipped in to help elevate the status of the women's programs. Director of Admissions Howie Muir was screening female candidates on their athletic prowess and contacting me about potential blue chip recruits. Head Football Coach Don Miller gave up his freshmen football field, while the team donated their game jerseys to my fledgling field hockey team. Professor Drew Hyland assisted and mentored me as I struggled as a novice basketball coach. Athletics for Trinity's female students made great progress through the 70's and 80's. Sports teams grew in number and respect and Title IX can be credited with prompting this transformation. Our equipment rooms proudly ordered jog bras and jock straps in equal numbers.

Since the passage of Title IX female athletes have made great strides. In 1972, 1 out of 27 high school girls participated in sports. By 2002, 1 out of 2.25 high school girls participate in sports. In 1972, the average number of intercollegiate teams offered per school was 2. By 2002, the average number was at an all time high of 8.34. And, yet in some high schools and colleges fair and equitable are not critical components of the athletic experience for young women. Some softball players compete on substandard fields with no scoreboards or bleachers and female basketball players wear outdated uniforms playing at non-prime game times making it impossible for parents or fans to get to their contests. Despite 34 years of progress, girls and women have still not achieved full athletic equity with their male peers.

Since those responsible for school policies are not playing fair, the rest of us have begun to keep score. We count bodies on rosters, square footage in locker rooms, meal

money on road trips, and we even measure the media coverage in the school newspaper with a ruler. School administrators have cut men's teams in hopes of avoiding lawsuits for non-compliance. It has created unnecessary tension with people choosing sides on the issue. Trinity alumnus George Will wrote, "boys and men have higher interest levels, abilities, and zeal regarding competition and a more distinctive need for hierarchy and organized team activities, and therefore deserve more participation slots and funding. Title IX is forced to create the demand and interest in sports for girls and women and socially engineers them to be more like young boys in order to be admired and respected." Countering that opinion is the President of the Women's Sports Foundation Donna Lopiano who states, "Title IX was enacted to remedy the discrimination that resulted from stereotyped notions that girls and women have less interest and abilities than boys and men. Interest and ability does not develop in a vacuum ~ they evolve as a function of opportunity, support, and experience." To assist colleges and universities with compliance the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force came up with the following statement:

"An athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants in both programs would accept as fair and equitable the overall program of the other gender."

The female athletes at Trinity College are fortunate. Our college and athletic administrators were front-runners in interpreting the law and it's meaning. We attempt to run a balanced program which provides equitable benefits and treatment for both genders. Although we are not in complete compliance with participation slots, the last 5 sports that have been added have been for women and we have managed not to eliminate any male sports teams. When a program area has been questioned regarding an equity issue, it is taken seriously and a commitment is made towards a corrective plan of action.

The one area that needs continued attention is the direction of alumni donations towards specific athletic programs. The men's teams have almost 150 more years of an alumni base from which to draw this extra funding. This discrimination can often feel more like a sport inequity than a gender inequity, but it can impact both. The athletic department with the assistance of the alumni and development offices needs to be diligent in our stewardship and management of these special booster/friends' monies that can directly impact compliance issues.

In the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, our women's teams collectively brought home 19 medals. The University of Connecticut Huskies women's team will defend their basketball title in the upcoming NCAA Championship. On our own campus, Trinity women's squash team was recently featured side by side with the men in Sports Illustrated. This fall, our women's cross country came in 2nd at the NCAA Championship. Our female wrestler received a medal in the US Girls and Women's National Championships this past weekend. None of this would have happened without the passing of the Title IX legislation and school officials who have shown vision and courage in doing the right thing. To have the talent to compete on an intercollegiate athletic squad is a privilege. But, to have the opportunity provided to try-out is a right.

Gender equity is not about privilege ~ it's the law, and it's about playing fair.

A Co-Ed Professor

Dori Katz

I have always wondered why the word "co-ed" defines a female student at a college or university. After all, it is the opposite sex that makes a school co-educational, therefore, a "co-ed" could just as easily be a male student, especially one at a formerly all women college like Vassar, or Smith. Given that the origin of the label then implies a female being granted admission at a formerly male institution, I guess I was a co-ed professor when I was hired to join a male faculty at Trinity College in 1969.

Since this was almost 35 years ago, some of my memories of what Trinity College was like then may be vague and others so strange that I went back to verify them in the 1969 college Bulletin. Were there really so few women on the faculty here as I remember? I looked up the faculty and found that there was one part-time lecturer in Mathematics, Margery Butcher; one lecturer in Anthropology, Nancy Nettig, who was married to Tony Nettig, a professor in the History Department. (Nancy left when Tony Nettig did). There was a woman in the "Government Department," today better known as the department of Political Science. I have absolutely no memory of her; I don't think we ever met. There were two tenure track faculty members, Professor Uta Saine, who taught French, and myself, also hired to teach French and Comparative Literature. (Uta also left after two years.)

I was very much a fish out of water when I came: I was from Los Angeles and the New England culture struck me as rigid, cold and parochial. I had gone to large, public, co-educational schools. I was getting my Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and not from one of the Ivy League schools. I was Jewish and was very surprised at the reciting of Protestant prayers before faculty dinners and other professional functions, and on the whole found the place very WASPy. Still, the biggest adjustment of all was being a faculty woman in such a "male" atmosphere. Nothing had prepared me for it. Things in 1969 were very different. Certain "unfair" realities had been accepted by most graduate female students. In Iowa, I roomed with a woman earning a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology--when she looked for a job, we understood that when she was a finalist for a position, she would not get it if the other finalists were men. When I was interviewing for jobs, I thought I would only get a position at Trinity College if a male colleague had turned the job down because he didn't want to teach at an all-male college. I didn't want to teach at an all-female college and had turned down a good offer from Hollins College. I thought that since Trinity College had accepted women, it would be indeed, co-ed. Besides, I was more or less used to moving in a man's world. In graduate school, the Writers' Workshop which had lured me to Iowa was comprised mostly of men. (Since I was brought up by a single parent who coped and did very well, it never occurred to me that I couldn't cope.) Furthermore, in 1969, the first job was not your "real" job so I didn't expect to stay at Trinity College very long but chose New England precisely because I thought I would wind up back in California and wanted to experience a different part of the country. And here I am, how many years later?

But in spite of all that, nothing had prepared me for Trinity's atmosphere. It was like being in a boy's junior high school, on good days, and a boy's elementary school on others. The male "bonding" seemed to me clannish, rude and childish behavior. A lot of

my colleagues seemed very uncomfortable around me. I got a lot of attention, but at the same time, I felt invisible. I was named to practically every faculty committee I was eligible for because there had to be a woman's point of view, but on the other hand, I felt I was never listened to, never taken seriously. I was often called Mrs. Saine or Mrs. Netting. Uta Saine, who had a thick German accent, was a 5 '9" redhead with a Joan of Arc haircut. Nancy Netting had spent years in India and wore flowing saris. I didn't think we looked alike. But some colleagues didn't seem to be able to tell us apart. Men rushed to take my coat, but ignored my opinions. The Faculty Lounge, where people went after lunch to have coffee and cigars, was adorned with the portraits of all the former presidents of Trinity—all men in full academic regalia. I swear there were spittoons in that room. (I'm no longer sure if that was true but I felt there was.) I remember the prevalent stink of cigars; in fact, I started smoking one myself, not to emulate my colleagues, nor to get even, but because I knew that they found it shocking; (I reverted back to childish behavior and wanted to do indecorous things to shake things up.) Meanwhile the zeitgeist weighing on the faculty was bitchy wit, sherry and nuts, and of course, cigars. Never mind that my salary was smaller than that of comparable colleagues—I didn't even question the discrepancy because it was so "normal." I didn't have to see charts to know it. And indeed, when charts came out, they confirmed my suspicions. The reasons for the difference in salaries were the expectation that a man had a family to support or would have one someday. Well, my widowed mother worked long hours so that she and I could eat, and no one paid her more because she had a family. But *autre temps, autre mœurs*.

Of course every reception invitation suggested that I bring my "wife" with me; my mail was addressed to Mr. Katz. There were no women's bathrooms in Seabury Hall where my office was housed. The students, the staff, and I had to put on our coats in the winter and go to another building. I often crashed the men's room, with one of my male colleagues keeping watch outside; other times, when I was on my own, I ran into my red-faced colleagues. (Eventually they did put in a women's bathroom in Seabury Hall, but most women couldn't use the mirrors in it because they were too high. I suppose it had never occurred to anyone that women were, in general, shorter than men.) I could probably go on and on about petty details, and they are petty, but it was the accumulation of these little signs that indicated it was still a man's place and I was like a "guest" here—perhaps welcomed by many, but not really a member of the club.

I did feel closer to the students. The female students were probably the brightest, sharpest, prettiest, liveliest group of students I had ever seen. They were a delight to teach. They were also "dateless" most weekends. I just couldn't understand it. I asked my male students why they didn't date the women on campus. I knew they were used to driving to girls' colleges for dates but why now, when they had so many young, attractive women on campus? They replied that it was because they were on campus! The boys did not want to take someone out on Saturday who they would see on Monday, in class, on the long walk, etc.... Why? Because, they then wouldn't be able to be themselves. They wouldn't know what role to play. To me it meant that they were incapable of dealing with women as friends, i.e. as equals. I think this childish attitude of seeing girls only as potential dates defined the whole atmosphere at Trinity then. I hope it is different now, although from what my female students tell me, there are still many problems regarding male/female student interactions.

For me things changed. Times changed; the feminist movement changed women's attitudes. I know it changed mine. I began to call colleagues on sexist remarks. I interrupted offensive jokes. When people said "you're not one of those feminists, are you?" I immediately said "yes," even though I had no idea if I was or not. It may well be that after Trinity College went co-ed it attracted young men who didn't want a single sex institution and all it implied. But mostly I think things changed because more and more women were hired on the faculty and on the administration. And of course, the student body slowly became truly co-ed.

The first year I was at Trinity, I felt so isolated, and so lonely that I spent my time locked in my apartment working on my Ph.D. dissertation which I finished in three months. I would like to think that no woman on the faculty feels that isolated anymore because she is a woman. I know that true equality is only possible when gender is no longer an issue. I'm happy for my many female colleagues. I am happy that there are enough of us that no one of us represents the "woman's" point of view, that we can disagree about things, like "normal" people do, that we can be so different, from different backgrounds, from different ethnic groups.

Although I was the first woman tenured at Trinity College, I have learned that it's not the first woman who is instrumental but the second, and the second is not as important as the third, and so on. It is all the women who came after me who really started "the revolution." Now all the spittoons are gone.