

## Chapter Five:

### **The Role of Women in Commercial Television in Western Australia with special emphasis on questions of Discrimination by the ‘Glass Ceiling’ and Sexual Harassment:**

#### **Introduction:**

This chapter is an analysis of women’s role in the television industry with special emphasis on the area of local ‘live’ production. However, because of the glamour of working at a television station, most women in all areas of employment enjoyed the status of ‘reflected glory’ by association. The chapter discloses different attitudes by the two commercial stations with TVW7 primarily showing the way in most areas but perpetuating the myth of ‘women in their place’ in others. Once again, there is a dearth of literature. In one recently published book specifically devoted to women in television, featuring twenty-five female contributors, none are from Western Australia.<sup>1</sup>

When I first entered the field of Social Sciences in 1995, a constant area of discourse centred about political correctness, generally with recurring references to sexual containment [glass ceiling] and harassment. The subject had such a prominent place in under-graduate discussion that in constructing this thesis, I deemed it necessary to specifically examine those questions in the context of television operation, a more non-specific gender segregated industry than most in the general business community. Whilst the term ‘glass ceiling’ was found to be in general usage, it is remarkable that some respondents (both female and male) were unfamiliar with the term.

#### **1959:**

The first Channel 7 Production Department was headed by three women.<sup>2</sup> At Channel 9 there were no female producers for at least four years.<sup>3</sup> Although TVW7 claims to have employed

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<sup>1</sup> Annete Blonski (ed.), *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Coralie Condon, former TV Producer, personal communication, interview, 5 May 1999.  
Lloyd Lawson, former TV Presenter and Programme Manager TVW7 and STW9, personal communication, interview, 27 July 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Veronica Overton-Low, former TV Presenter, personal communication, interview, 14 May 1999.  
[She produced the *Tim Connor Breakfast Show* for Ch.9 in 1969/70.]

the first Australian female news-readers, female presenters were usually hired for their photogenic qualities.<sup>4</sup> In certain cases they may have been tempted by visions of ‘stardom’ and sometimes promises were made regarding such things as voice tuition and singing training.<sup>5</sup> Initially at TVW7, female staff (including Presenters when not ‘on-air’) were compelled to wear uniform dress. This consisted of a button-up light-blue blouse with a ruffle and a pleated darker-blue skirt. The hem of that garment could not be higher than two inches above the knees and memories of the Company Secretary down on his knees with ruler, in front of a kneeling female staffer, are well remembered.<sup>6</sup> The general male staff had to wear dark coloured slacks, white shirts and ties. The male technical staff wore grey dust-coats over these. This regimentation was not required at STW9.

Liesbet van Zoonen is in accord with other proponents of feminism, in stating that ‘Like most other employment sectors, the media work-force is also horizontally segregated.’<sup>7</sup> In her British experience ‘it is hard to find women in senior management...even in women-dominated areas.’<sup>8</sup> Van Zoonen makes these points, qualified as ‘crude generalizations’<sup>9</sup>:

- 1) Press and broadcasting are dominated by men.
- 2) The higher up the hierarchy and in terms of positional prestige – the less women.
- 3) Women are delegated work which can be seen as an extension of domestic duties, jobs requiring qualities of care, nurturance and humanity.
- 4) Women are paid less for the same work.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the above, the following record of the experiences of Australian counterparts appears to belie these comments, although there is agreement regarding unequal remuneration.

### **The Eastern States Experience:**

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Ashton, personal communication, interview, 17 August 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Marie Gianatti, Presenter and Singer, personal communication, interview, 24 August 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd Lawson, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, Sage, London, 1994, p.51

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.53

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

In expressing the Eastern States Experience, Leonie Morgan has argued that in this relatively young industry, there are women who have ‘grown up with the industry and are looking towards it for new opportunities’<sup>11</sup> She notes that the world of television occupation is ‘not conducive to combining with child rearing – it is ego-based, power driven and obsessional’.<sup>12</sup> According to Morgan, in 1996 the industry was not a lot different to the 1960s in the area of gender segmentation, with few women holding senior positions. [As will be found later in this Chapter, women did hold management positions at departmental level and Ms. Maureen Pavsic headed the entire Seven Network in 2001-02. She was formerly Head of Sales in Sydney.<sup>13</sup>] In regard to the ability to hold senior positions, Morgan’s investigations and research reveal that ‘Women who have succeeded at this level work hard and are confident’<sup>14</sup>

When television first came to Perth, women were co-opted from the theatre, came from the Eastern States or overseas with some experience or had no prior training, ‘Today, successful women have a strong background in the industry or previous work experience in the industry.’<sup>15</sup> Morgan suggests that in the earlier years of television, University degrees were not much help as this industry is an area where skills are regarded as being more important than academic qualifications. ‘...confidence and contacts are crucial.’<sup>16</sup> In Perth television, unlike the field of journalism, there was no instituted training or grading. Experience was gained on the job and length of time in the production industry was the only accepted ‘credential’. Women in the industry observe that male dominance was endemic, there is a glass ceiling and women are still regulated by ‘age, body clock and marriage’.<sup>17</sup> The Eastern States experience for women has been that the technical/operations area is still a closed shop,

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<sup>11</sup> Leonie Morgan, ‘The Women in Television Project – Women Moving In, Moving Up and Moving On’ in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.13.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Campbell, interview, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Leonie Morgan, 2001, p.14

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

particularly in the lighting, audio and camera divisions.<sup>18</sup> As will be seen in this chapter, there has been a better situation prevailing in Western Australia during the period under investigation, 1958-1990. Janeen Faithfull was a woman with academic qualifications (UCLA 1985) who has had a better personal experience than most. In 1998 she was appointed Head of Network Production at the Seven Network.<sup>19</sup> She saw attitudes from male superiors as more 'mentoring' than 'patronising'.<sup>20</sup> Lyndal Marks notes that in the 1980s, marriage and children usually meant television career end for women, but the 'happily, things are changing'. She phoned Gerald Stone at *60 Minutes*, was granted an appointment and then was 'brain frozen' when offered a job as a researcher.<sup>21</sup> Marks went on to be the first Australian on the American *60 Minutes*, returned to Sydney to be Executive-Producer of the *Midday Show* and now develops pilot-programs for the Nine Network. Tarni James, wrote for and produced Nine Network shows for fifteen years (to 1996) entered the field by winning a radio contest to be an amateur journalist, covering the Charles and Diana Royal Wedding. This opened doors in London and her career was established more through good luck and personal push than anything else. James observed that 'women...[advance in the television industry]...by zigzagging between different organisations and different jobs...male colleagues seem to progress in a more linear fashion.'<sup>22</sup>

Fiona Baker was another woman who simply asked for a job with *Simon Townsend's Wonder World*. She went on to become a producer of *60 Minutes* and the ABC's *7.30 Report*. She says that the notion that a woman had to be like man to succeed in television was wrong.<sup>23</sup> While a basic rounded education is necessary to work in television, the advantages of an outgoing personality, a genuine wish to participate and the perseverance would appear to be the criteria

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.16

<sup>19</sup> Janeen Faithfull, 'That Extra Mile', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.22

<sup>21</sup> Lyndal Marks, 'Magnificent Juggling', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.24.

<sup>22</sup> Tarni James, 'From Dance Therapy to Mouthing Off' in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, pp. 38-40

<sup>23</sup> Fiona Baker, 'Right Place, Right Time', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.42

for success. Ros Tatarka, gained experience as a production co-ordinator on *Prisoner* then moved to the Grundy Organisation said that ‘...it has often been an exhausting effort to get underneath over, and around the barriers...’<sup>24</sup> Current SBS Presenter Vivian Schenker replied to an advertisement and gained a cadetship with the Sydney ABC. She said that the Press Gallery in Canberra was ‘particularly hard for a woman...’<sup>25</sup> and ‘...speaking candidly here, one of the dangers of not having children or a partner is that work may become too much of a source of your self-esteem and satisfaction.’<sup>26</sup> Pam Barnes worked in Melbourne advertising and got into television by chance when involved with the preparation of ‘live-to-air-commercials for *In Melbourne Tonight*. Learning ‘...from absorption...’<sup>27</sup> She combined career and motherhood, and her credits included producing for a period, the long running *Hey! Hey! It’s Saturday*. ‘I always felt I would have been paid more if I was a man, but I didn’t suffer, or feel like I’d suffered, from being a woman, particularly in terms of promotion.’<sup>28</sup> She said, ‘...you have to remember that you are only as good as the ratings and some guy could decide if you stay or go.’<sup>29</sup> She advises playing at ‘teamwork’ and said ‘You don’t have to be a bitch...’and offers this good advice, ‘...let important men think it was *their* idea, and less important men *know* that it was *your* idea.’<sup>30</sup> Rachel Perkins started in 1988 as a presentation trainee in Alice Springs, working for the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association. When asked why the four or five Indigenous producers in Australia are all women she said, ‘Because blokes are slack.’<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ros Tatarka, ‘It’s all to do with persistence’ in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.47

<sup>25</sup> Vivian Schenker, ‘The Best Job In The World’, in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.52

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.56.

<sup>27</sup> Pam Barnes, ‘You’re Only As Good As The Ratings’, in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.58

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.61.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.61

<sup>31</sup> Rachel Perkins, ‘It’s All About The Work’, in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.67  
(Rachel is the daughter of Aboriginal Activist the late Charles Perkins.)

Jacqui Culliton started at the bottom at ATN7 in Sydney as technical assistant, telecine and tape in the 1960s. In May 1998 she was appointed General Manager, Network Production at Network Ten after being head of entertainment at the Seven Network. She said 'I have done so many things in television...that's why as Head of Production I can use all that experience. I've been there, I've done that. I know how shows are made. I know when scripts are good, bad or indifferent. I also have a good idea of who can do what in the industry...I've loved everything I've done in television...' <sup>32</sup> Margot Phillipson rose to be Executive Producer Television South Australia. She said, 'I think that we, as women, have to take on the role of educating men, particularly older men.' <sup>33</sup> Louise McCann was Network Ten's Network Business and Development Manager for News, Current Affairs and Sport, overseeing a budget of \$15 million. She started work at the AMC as a production assistant on *Playschool*. She observed that men only nod their heads when they are in agreement and that '...men don't intend to put women down, it's just the different way that we relate to each other...men don't share credit.' <sup>34</sup>

Cherrie Bottger is the Network Ten head of Children's Television. She said that when she started '...women were relegated to the role of secretaries, clerks, director's assistants (we did a lot of assistance back then).' <sup>35</sup>

Children's television, who really cares? Trust me, commercial television stations do. The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) brought in Children's Television Standards 20 years ago. For a station to hold a broadcast licence they have to transmit 390 hours of children's television a year. Of this quota 130 hours needs to be aimed at preschool children targeting 3- to 5-year-olds, 32 hours of children's drama, and 228 hours of C-classified programs (target audience 5-to 14-year-olds). <sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jacqui Culliton, 'Thrown in the Deep End and Loving It' in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.74

<sup>33</sup> Margot Phillipson, 'Danger Men At Work', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.82

<sup>34</sup> Louise McCann, 'Let The Future In' in, *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, pp.86-87

<sup>35</sup> Cherrie Bottger, 'The Challenge of Children's Television', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.88

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.90

Jennie Brockie studied literature and communications at Macquarie University before a career as a journalist and producer in television. In 1998 she had been at the ABC for 22 years and said, 'You start to realise that the things you take for granted in fact represent quite a body of experience.'<sup>37</sup> Well known SBS News Presenter Mary Kostakidis, in 1980 was Director of Program Preparation responsible for more than 100 staff. Her background was court interpreter, researcher, editor and university tutor. She said, 'Experience has taught me that you cannot assume that because someone is a woman, you are both going to be on the same side, that you are going to see eye to eye, or that you can assume support, so I like to deal with men and women equally.'<sup>38</sup> Vicki Jones started as a Publicity Assistant at TCN9 in Sydney. She has been Director of Network Programming at both the Nine and Ten Networks. She said, 'I have never thought of myself as a woman trying to work in a man's field, even though commercial television is considered a boy's club.'<sup>39</sup> Bryan Smith offers this advice to 'TV Hopefuls', 'The dedication required to succeed often lets people know whether or not a career in television is right for them.', 'Another point that you need to know is that, by itself, a degree isn't a guarantee of a job in TV. You need more' and 'You also need determination and to keep your name in front of prospective employees... TV employers tend to promote from within.'<sup>40</sup>

A conclusion that can be drawn from this excellent collection of notated experiences is that, although a few females who have worked in Australia had tertiary education, predominantly 'personality' was the best asset in regard to gaining employment. The record demonstrates the importance of the 'producers' as compared to the 'presenters' of television. Standing in stark contrast to the foregoing is the undisputed evidence that no such similar work has been forthcoming concerning the women involved in Western Australian Local 'Live' Production

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<sup>37</sup> Jennie Brockie, 'A Sense of Passion', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.98.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Kostakidis, 'Building Connections', in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.103

<sup>39</sup> Vicki Jones, 'Commercial Television is Not For The Faint Hearted' in *Shared Visions Women in Television*, Annete Blonski (ed.), Australian Film Commission, Melbourne, 2001, p.109

<sup>40</sup> Bryan Smith, *Desperately Seeking Screentime*, [The Australian Guide To A Career In Television], Simon & Schuster, Roseville, 1994, pp.21, 41, 50.

and television generally. It is the intention of the remainder of this chapter to correct that situation.

### **Women in Western Australian Local 'Live' Production:**

Coralie Condon, a public servant and involved part-time in the Perth theatre scene. She was offered a job in early 1959 by the late Brian Treasure, the newly appointed Sales Manager of TVW7, but without anything being firm she went to Sydney to pursue her own interests. Three weeks later a telegram requested that she meet the newly appointed Programme Manager Lloyd Lawson at the Australia Hotel in Sydney. She did this and was offered a staff position as 'dog's-body'<sup>41</sup> She was responsible for the appointments of News-readers David Farr, Gary Meadows, Geoff Walker and Philip Edgely.<sup>42</sup> In the early sixties TVW7 started an afternoon programme for women called *Televisit* directed by Mike Brand. After the first two hostesses Joan Sydney (who went to Sydney and performed very successfully as an actress) and Sandra McNab (who retired because of pregnancy) resigned, the director suggested that Coralie Condon host the show herself. This she did for five years before the position was taken up by Stephanie Quinlan. Coralie Condon's starting salary in 1959 was nineteen pounds per week.<sup>43</sup> Lloyd Lawson as Programme Manager was getting thirty-five pounds per week.<sup>44</sup> Station boss James Cruthers said that Rolf Harris was being paid forty pounds a week, 'More than I was getting!'<sup>45</sup> Sir James Cruthers described Condon as,

...a very important cog in the TVW wheel...She was responsible for almost all the production we did, one way or another...quite unusual that a woman should do this in those days...probably a rub-off from my experiences with Macartney...We didn't see men and women, we saw people...<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Coralie Condon, former TVW7 Producer 1959-1969, personal communication, interview, 5 May 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

David Farr was a radio announcer with 6PM. Gary Meadows was the same at 6PR. Geoff Walker an ABC radio News-reader. Philip Edgely was an actor who did the publicity for his Father's firm, His Majesty's Theatre.

<sup>43</sup> Coralie Condon, 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Lloyd Lawson, personal communication, interview, 27 July 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Sir James Cruthers, personal communication, interview, April 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Sir James Cruthers, personal communication, interview, 3 June 1999.

Former TVW7 Presenter Garry Carvolth added, ‘Coralie Condon was a lovable lady, and again, just so experienced. And her enthusiasm and care just made it a delight to work in those days because you just felt that you were part of a family.’<sup>47</sup> A seventeen year old part time model [identification deleted by request] with no television experience when she was hired to do ‘live’ commercials, quickly became a presenter on various women’s programs. Of the ‘glass ceiling’ she said, ‘I’m unfamiliar with the term in relation to the industry when I was involved.’<sup>48</sup> On sexual discrimination or harassment she said,

Yes – especially in the early days when most of the Male hierarchy thought of women/females as ‘Pretty young things’ and didn’t expect or want her to have any brains.

Thank goodness for a couple of super intelligent women – newsreaders and producers who forced the guys to change their point of view.<sup>49</sup>

The first director at TVW7 was a woman named Beverley Gledhill who came from (and returned to) the A.B.C. in Sydney. She directed the first ‘live’ programme, the opening of the Station, which was fully rehearsed and run-through the night before being put to air. The presentation was flawless.<sup>50</sup> The first Production Assistant was an English woman named Penny Hoes who had British television experience as a Director. Another Western Australian named Jean Hunsley was a dominant figure when TVW7 first went to air and her considered value in Production is illustrated by this comment from Sir James Cruthers,

Jean Hunsley!...was a very important production person and very co-operative, but she didn’t want to wear a uniform. On and on and on she went, so I finally sent her a memo (and I’ve got a copy of it here somewhere) in which I gave her a special dispensation.

‘This is to declare that Jean (whatever her second name was) Hunsley forthwith is not required to wear the uniform dress of the Company!’ and sent it to her and put it on the notice board. I don’t know when they stopped wearing uniforms. It wasn’t a real issue, it was a quite funny thing. That’s the only kind of woman’s thing that ever caused the slightest controversy!

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<sup>47</sup> Gary Carvolth, former TVW7 Presenter, personal communication, interview, 22 June 2000.

<sup>48</sup> Former female presenter, request for anonymity, written communication, 15 June 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Sir James Cruthers, April 1999.

A typist named Marion Greiling (later Leyer) also moved up into a similar position. During the period 1960-1985 she became Production Manager at TVW7 and occupied a similar position at TEN from 1987 to 1990.<sup>51</sup> Jeff Newman said ‘Marion was an excellent Producer to work with. She had a fair amount of respect and a fair amount of power as far as live television was concerned.’<sup>52</sup> On the ‘glass ceiling’ Marion said, ‘Not applicable – during my lengthy time in the industry if you were capable you were promoted’<sup>53</sup> The foregoing again demonstrates that basic sexism was absent from Western Australian commercial television. In the main, people were hired on the basis of their personality (enthusiasm was the prime requisite) and opportunity was provided for both women and men to demonstrate their capabilities.

Marie Gianatti (nee Koomen) applied for a singing audition with then Musical Director Max Bostock. She got a regular ‘spot’ once a month on *Teen-Beat*. She was then offered a full-time position, still doing the teenage programme plus being a ‘girl-next-door’ on the *Today* program hosted by Lloyd Lawson as well as regular office hours as a filing clerk. Marie remembered,

I was in the department for filing commercials and they’d send me a script and I’d have to get the commercials [filmed] out that were going to go into the programmes for the night or the day or whatever and then they’d send them back and I’d have to file them back up again.

It was this long narrow room full of these films (laughs) which I didn’t like very much but you know, I was working for them and in the end I was very disenchanted with them all.<sup>54</sup>

Questioned about harassment, she recalled,

...there was one time when [deleted] wanted me to try on these bathers. I mean, (pause) when I think about it now I could have got myself into so much strife. I was so sort of naïve and innocent that he couldn’t have done anything because it would have been so crass for him to do it, you know? So awful!<sup>55</sup>

When asked if she did indeed try on the bathers Marie said,

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<sup>51</sup> Marion Leyer, former TVW7 Production Manager, written communication, 21 June 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Jeff Newman, former STW9 and still TVW7 Presenter, personal communication, interview, 3 June 1999.

<sup>53</sup> Marion Leyer 21 June 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Marie Gianatti, 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Yes, I tried the bathers on (laughs), sort of, and he took photos, but it was in, it was in a small, little room, and you know, but he didn't stay there while; I went into the Ladies' and put them on and then came out and he took photos. When I think back, I think 'My Gosh! How could I have done it?'<sup>56</sup>

Marie finally wearied of the fact that her work-mates took advantage of her coming from a migrant family and not being well schooled. One day she tired of her television career and announced, 'You people think I'm God! And I can't perform like God!' then just walked out!

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Another of the TVW7 female personalities in 1960 was Carolyn Noble. She had worked for a Real Estate Agent for a year before being hired by James Cruthers who was a friend of her Father. She used to baby-sit the Cruthers' children at times. She was seventeen years of age.

I was employed as a typist [in the Production Department] and I arrived at ten. I wore the blue pleated skirt and the pale blue blouse...And the heels which had to have caps on them because of the cork floors and I worked in the main typing pool...I worked there from ten till, it must have been half past five and then I'd go and put on my *Carolyn* T-shirt and a bit of lipstick and my Mouseketeer ears and I'd be on camera... I was paid eight pounds two shillings in my first salary...Brian Treasure...was a father figure to me...I attribute the fact that I didn't become 'star struck' to Brian...he made sure that everyone kept their feet on the ground. And that was part of the reason that they included me as a typist actually. I was not going to be employed as a television personality. I was typing!<sup>58</sup>

On the question of the 'glass ceiling' Carolyn's experience was better than most,

It means that women can't go higher than their stations...Now people will have told you of course how we were viewed at Channel Seven. The fact that we had to leave when we got married was quite amazing really. Well, I didn't have to leave when I got married, in fact I appeared on camera until I was eight months pregnant and the camera just took tighter and tighter headshots...so in a way that was breaking through whereas I remember that secretaries...of... Brian Treasure and Jim Cruthers had to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 1999.

<sup>58</sup> Carolyn Tannock [nee Noble], personal communication, interview, 8 August 2001.

go, if they got married, and I don't really – I think that Channel Seven might have been ahead of its time, of other businesses.<sup>59</sup>

When asked the question in regard to sexual harassment and discrimination Carolyn Noble was very forthright saying 'It didn't happen at all!' Her best memories are of a children's programme called *Stars of the Future*. Marion Leyer was the Producer and the judges were Coralie Condon and the Scottish entertainer Max Kay. She recalled

'...the loads of Australian talent who actually appeared on *Stars of the Future* ...Fantastic!'<sup>60</sup> Her on-air partner 'Captain' Jim Atkinson said, 'She was a wonderful lass! I thought she was anyway.'<sup>61</sup>

Former presenter Veronica Overton was working in a Melbourne Advertising Agency when at her Mother's coaxing she returned to Perth and auditioned for STW9 Production Manager Denzil Howson. At the age of twenty-two she was successful and started in Production at thirty-five dollars per week. Her previous TV experience was as a dancer on *The Good Oil*, produced at TVW7 by Coralie Condon. At STW9, while she was to appear as a hostess on the Children's programmes, she had to start work in the office at 9 a.m., preparing invitations for the Women's and Children's 'live' shows and keeping the records for the Australian Performing Rights Association returns.<sup>62</sup> As well, she presented the 'Weather' each week-night and consequently was at the studios until 7 p.m.; did voice-over presentations in the announcer's booth when required and acted as an interviewer of the weekly religious programme *Seek the Truth*. She objected to having to wear a feathered head-dress during the Big Chief Channel Nine era but to no avail. Added to these duties were regular appearances representing STW9 at outside events, for which she received no remuneration for the first two years. After that a system of charging was introduced and she received twenty-five percent of the fees. While the Station supplied her make-up, Veronica had to buy her own

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Jim Atkinson, TVW7 Presenter, personal communication, interview, 12 May 1999.

<sup>62</sup> [All music used 'on-air' had to be catalogued and royalty fees paid to APRA]

‘on-camera’ clothes. She recalls that ‘men’s attitudes were a little bit on the chauvinistic side’<sup>63</sup> On sexual harassment she said,

Well, that’s what they call it now. I mean I handled it, I ignored it, and if that happens now, that’s still the way I handle it...certain rude jokes were said which I didn’t appreciate. It’s really hard. There were certain references that were made...innuendo. You know. They were fairly, on a constant basis.’

PH: Now this ‘sexual harassment’, that’s what we’ll call it. Did it only come from the production staff or was it general amongst other people as well?

VOL: Mainly because I was with the production people...

PH: What about studio staff. Audio guys. Producers?

VOL: No. No. [long pause] Oh maybe a couple!<sup>64</sup>

As well as performing the already described duties Veronica became the female ‘do it all’ on the afternoon women’s programmes, *The Jeff Newman Show* a night variety show in 1967 and *The Tonight Shows in 1969*. She also produced the *Breakfast Show with Tim Connor* in that year which meant arriving at the studios at 6 a.m., then being there till after the nightly ‘Weather’! Her salary rose to seventy dollars per week.<sup>65</sup>

When Veronica Overton resigned from STW9 in 1970,<sup>66</sup> her position was taken by Jenny Clemesha [now Seaton] who had previously been the ‘fill-in’ while Veronica was on holidays. Her day was not dissimilar to her predecessor. Arriving at 8 a.m., she conducted a regular morning pre-schoolers’ programme called *Junior World* at 10 a.m. At 3 p.m., she produced and presented *Woman’s World*,

And then in the afternoon I’d pop across to the other side of the studio in the commercial break to do the Children’s programmes because we’d got down to the spinning of the wheels and the barrels and stuff like that, not a big production like you guys had done, and then I’d stay behind and do the weather...there were a couple of

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<sup>63</sup> Veronica Overton-Low, former STW9 Presenter and Producer, personal communication, interview, 14 May 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Veronica Overton went to Adelaide where she conducted the TVW7 affiliate station SAS10’s Children’s Programs for five years.

quiz shows, remember those, *I've Got a Secret*, *Tell The Truth* and I did *Junior Spotlight*. I compered that one which was a junior talent programme.<sup>67</sup>

Remembering the 'Weather' Jenny Seaton said,

They put me in a bikini in the pool in summer and a silly raincoat and an umbrella in winter, and then there was a situation with black and white cameras where they had what they called 'reverse scan'. They could give a mirror image, I'm sorry, the reverse. So I stood behind a glass sheeting with a map in front of me and I'd draw on it and it would be reversed at home so it looked like I was writing backwards. That always used to intrigue people.<sup>68</sup>

The salary was one hundred and twenty dollars per week but she received no remuneration for numerous outside appearances mainly for 'charities'.<sup>69</sup> When asked if there was there any such thing as sexual harassment?

JS: No!No! No,no,no,no,no. I think, I've never ever had, mind you I could probably be insulted by this but I'm not! I think that if you don't have enough confidence in what you do, you might be tempted to sort of flirt a bit with the powers that be to try and get somewhere, because I used to see a lot of that happening. Um, but no. I was a Mum; I had a young son. I was on my own, I was single at that stage; my marriage had broken up.

PH: So the 'casting couch' thing never came into it ever?

JS: No. I'm questioning that! [laughter] No not really.

PH: People were just more decent in those days?

JS: They were generally speaking. There was a higher moral code.

PH: ...Some others have told me that there was some.

JS: I don't know. I think there was a bit of it about. I saw a few girls being auditioned.<sup>70</sup>

Jenny Seaton continued at STW9 in her various capacities until 1982, when the national programme *The Mike Walsh Show* was acquired by the Station. 'So David [Aspinall] in his

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<sup>67</sup> Jenny Clemesha, former STW9 and TVW7 presenter and producer, personal communication, interview, 27 March 2001. [The writer was one of the regular adjudicators over a four year period 1971-1975.]

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

amicable way told me ‘It’s about your future!’ and I said, ‘That’s nice David.’ [and he said] ‘There isn’t one!’ So basically that’s all that was said.’<sup>71</sup> There was no ‘Golden Handshake’ but she was awarded three Logies for best female personality during her time at Nine. She went home for eighteen months to look after a new son, having married again. In 1983 TVW7 Production Manager Marion Leyer (whom Jenny described as ‘brilliant’) asked her to join them to do a daytime programme. It was to be *Good Morning Perth* for many years and then *Jenny Seaton Live* continued until 1994. When asked if she was receiving equal remuneration as men doing the same job, Seaton said,

Probably not. Probably not. But you see I was still slotted into a female job really. They wouldn’t have had women out doing sport coverage or anything like that. Um, but I’ve been given opportunities. I mean I was down to the Americas Cup. We were doing our programme down there from seven in the morning and doing weather checks and updates and that was great during Fremantle that was great. It’s given me the opportunity to travel a lot.<sup>72</sup>

During her time at STW9 Jenny Clemesha had a number of male co-hosts including Lloyd Lawson, Clive Robertson and John May on *Woman’s World* and John Burgess on *Monday Live* but at TVW7 she was solo. In answer to a query regarding her leaving television,

...what happened, like I say at Nine, and in particular with ‘local television’ the last couple of years, it’s pretty much over, the style of programme that I was doing. But the one thing is, I saw ‘in’ those sorts of programmes at Nine and I really saw the last of them at Seven, as well. I went out after that long, long term but I reckon there’s still room, and, oh, you know, there may, everyone may well say that networking is the answer (and it is financially) but I do think there’s a need in each State to do something that people identify with. You can’t ignore that factor. Everyone, people, people want to know what’s going on. They like their local people. There’s still that affinity. I know because they ring us on-air with radio and they’ve got an affinity with us on radio.<sup>73</sup>

It has been recorded in earlier chapters on ratings and local ‘live’ production, that although morning shows for women did not attract a large viewing audience, TVW7 did persevere

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. [Jenny Seaton has done a four hour afternoon session with former TV Presenter Gary Carvolth for the past five years.]

with them as a community service, also remembering that they showed very good advertising returns.<sup>74</sup>

Jenny Dunstan was university trained in Drama and Theatre Arts, which at the time did not include television. She was employed at STW9 in 1979 to be the Hostess of the Perth Building Society's *Squirrels Club* for children, which went to air on Saturday mornings. She was given the job by the producers Keith and Chris Woodland and remembers her early years in television as being '...completely free from anything even slightly unpleasant and totally enjoyable.'<sup>75</sup>

Graphic Arts Departments were part of Production and usually controlled by a man with two or three women assistants. Kerry Stokes (now a successful artist) said,

I suppose it is breaking down. The 'girls' mentioned above [Liz Kirkham, Sue John, Marina Valmadre and Veronica Overton] have all gone on to achieve successful & fulfilling careers – mostly forming their own businesses employing staff, whilst bringing up families.<sup>76</sup>

And on the subject of discrimination she said, 'Yes, mainly through the wage structure. Whilst I was in charge of the department, my wage was less than my less experienced male assistant.'<sup>77</sup> Set construction and painting were for the first thirty years, male gender specific.<sup>78</sup> Make-up artists and hair-dressers were invariably women. One person who combined these skills, Nola Smith said, 'At the time of entering the industry [1961] there was a very firm glass ceiling, but over the years this barrier softened and many women attained management, or at least middle management positions.'<sup>79</sup> It is worthwhile to note her observations on, 'Personally I did not experience discrimination or harassment; on the

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<sup>74</sup> John Wright, personal communication, interview, TVW7, 11 June 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Jenny Dunstan, former STW9 and TEN Presenter, personal communication, telephone interview, 1 August 2003.

<sup>76</sup> Kerry Stokes, former STW9 Graphic Artist, written communication, 19 July 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> James Gilbert, former Set-Maker at TVW7, personal communication, July 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Nola Smith, former Production Assistant, Make-up Artist and Hair-dresser at both TVW7 and STW9, written communication, 5 June 2001.

contrary I was blessed with firm friendships and encouragement to extend my personal development.’<sup>80</sup>

As a student aged thirteen, Janet Prance [now Gill] first appeared on TVW7 in 1959 as a dancer. She later became a ‘Children’s Host’<sup>81</sup> and part of the team in *In Perth Tonight*. She said ‘At the time there were no fulltime women on air and everyone (women) had to do secretarial work be employed “full time” at TVW7 and had to leave when you married.’<sup>82</sup> Richard Ashton said ‘...Janet Prance. She was a beautiful model.’<sup>83</sup>

At the age of seventeen, after ‘two boring years’<sup>84</sup> as a typist in an insurance office, Liz Kirkham was interviewed by TVW7 Company Secretary Frank Moss. She recalls wearing a hat and gloves to make a good impression. Her job was Commercial Librarian. All commercials were on small strips of 16mm film which were physically spliced into each roll of film to be telecast, and then retrieved immediately for future use. Her job was to log, collect, file and redistribute the tiny strips of film.<sup>85</sup> She was ‘...called upon to do the odd bit of modelling for Audrey Barnaby’s ‘Shopping Guide’ which was a regular feature of Lloyd Lawson’s *Today Show*, as well as doing make-up when Audrey was on-air ‘Audrey was our full time make-up artist.’<sup>86</sup>

To answer your question about a sense of “glamour”. Perhaps it was more a sense of excitement, being involved in an extraordinary entertainment “revolution”. We all worked extremely hard and very long hours, particularly if there was a major production in the offing. It is difficult to describe the anticipation and great excitement that filled the corridors during some of those spectaculars like the Moscow Circus, complete with elephants, in the studio. The corridor outside the make-up rooms jammed with diamante clad circus performers ... all smoking Russian cigarettes (the smell of which lingered for some weeks). The productions of Brian

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Janet Gill [nee Prance] former TVW7 Presenter, written communication, 29 May 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Ashton, interview, 1999.

<sup>84</sup> Liz Kirkham, former TVW7 and STW9 Secretary and Production Assistant, written communication, undated. [2001]

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

Williams and Max Bostock were always fantastic with the same excitement – bearing in mind that these were all “Live”, so were rehearsed to the enth degree.<sup>87</sup> My thoughts on the “glass-ceiling”. I can honestly say that I have never had a problem. I have reached my goals, in fact at times, I am sure I have been able to look down through it (the glass ceiling) not try to go up through it. I’m sure it is one of the few industries where you are judged on your merits, not gender. I am going to contradict that, by saying, that in the “olden days”, when you got married you had to leave work. (Can you imagine getting away with it now?) This was a standard set by the Public Service and also many major companies. Channel 7 was owned by The West Australian at the time, and this was their policy too.<sup>88</sup>

Liz Kirkham joined STW9 in 1966 as Secretary to the Production Manager Denzil Howson, also performing the duties of Production Assistant. She is still involved with the Television Advertising and Feature Films industries. Her response to the question regarding sexual discrimination and harassment was a flat ‘No!’<sup>89</sup>

In 1967 at the age of twenty years Marina Valmadre was employed by STW9 in the area of Production and Administration. She became the Production Assistant on all live programming including *The Channel Niners Club*, *The Tonight Shows* and afternoon women’s programs. She remembers a sense of glamour ‘...and a great sense of fun and freedom.’<sup>90</sup>

evident  
Channel 9,  
so perhaps

I’ve never felt – then nor since – that a glass ceiling was  
at any of my workplaces. However, in relation to  
there were no female Manager or Producers at that time,  
my ambition was stilted! ... It isn’t now.<sup>91</sup>

Marina Valmadre’s answer regarding sexual discrimination and harassment was also a flat ‘No!’<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Marina Valmadre, former STW Production Assistant, 1967-1971, written communication, 7 June 2001.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Katharine Biaggi (nee Lavan) a former teacher was employed at TVW7 as a booth announcer and on-air presenter from 1959 till 1965 said, ‘There did not seem to be any limitations to women working in areas of responsibility.’ And ‘I have no recollection of any sexual discrimination or harassment.’<sup>93</sup> Dianne Moxham (nee Briggs) was a 17 year old speech and drama teacher when Coralie Condon made her one of TVW7’s first on-air personalities. She said that she was too young then to be aware of such things as the ‘glass ceiling’ and did not experience sexual harassment.<sup>94</sup>

Richard Ashton joined TVW7 as a cameraman after a stint as a Junior Account Executive with an Advertising Agency in Melbourne. He did a Television and Production Techniques Course at Technical College in 1959 and was interviewed for a job as Trainee Cameraman by Lloyd Lawson later that year. In the early sixties he went onto Programme Co-ordinating (4 p.m., till midnight) and then directed the early series of *In Perth Tonight* with Gary Meadows and Joan Bruce. Ashton said ‘...in lots of cases women were taken advantage of. They were probably paid less than they should have been. There certainly wasn’t equal pay. If you were a producer person, if you were a lady, I suspect you would have got two-thirds what the male got.’<sup>95</sup> He did not think that television was much different to the outside world in terms of ‘A couple of other ladies got involved with various men around the place and came to sticky ends. In fact [laughs] I married one of the ladies from here. But we’re still together.’<sup>96</sup>

Children’s Show Host ‘Captain’ Jim Atkinson had no recollection of anything untoward during his seven years at TVW7. His female counterpart was Carolyn Noble, ‘...the show needed...to have a male and a female. I think, to keep the balance.’<sup>97</sup> He considered that relations between men and women were ‘quite normal’ and based on mutual respect which

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<sup>93</sup> Katharine Biaggi, former TVW7 Presenter, written communication, 20 July 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Dianne Moxham, former TVW7 on-air Presenter, Personal Communication, Interview, 7 July 2002.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Ashton, personal communication, interview, 1999.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Jim Atkinson, personal communication, 5 August 2000.

was the ‘order of the day’.<sup>98</sup> It should be noted that Atkinson is a thoroughly decent chap of the Old School.

Kevin Campbell was a P.M.G. trained technician who joined TVW7 in 1964 at the age of twenty on the salary of nine pounds and six shillings per week. He rose to the position of Managing Director of the entire Seven Network 1991. He does not think that there is a ‘glass ceiling’. With so many years of experience in his rise from bottom to the top of the ladder Campbell had adequate opportunity to observe and remember much which is important to this study.<sup>99</sup> He does not consider that there was (or is) a glass ceiling for women and said that he was the first Manager (in Adelaide) to appoint a female Program Director. However, that job is very demanding ‘...basically twenty-four hours a day and when you try to balance that with your family, she eventually couldn’t hack it.’<sup>100</sup> Campbell said that in regard to sexual harassment, it definitely existed, if measured by today’s standards. At the same time, he agreed that although there was ‘...a very strict moral code at Seven in the early days.’<sup>101</sup>, he was privy to certain activities (by others) of a questionable nature. The inference to be drawn is that, as in all other areas of human endeavour, opportunity and inclination will overcome rules! Campbell also related a story which bolstered the belief that women employed in News Departments had to be made of sterner stuff.<sup>102</sup>

Gary Carvolth entered the medium as a fifteen year old announcer on Radio 6KY, doing six nights a week from 7 p.m., till 1 a.m., for ‘...the princely sum of eight pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence’ and his considerable experience reflected these answers,

PH: Just finally, sexual harassment,

GC: Yeah?

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<sup>98</sup> Jim Atkinson, former TVW7 Presenter, personal communication, interview, 12 May 1999.

<sup>99</sup> Kevin Campbell, former Managing Director of Seven Network, personal communication, interview 3 July 2001.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

[A reliable informant who wished to remain anonymous told me that when the toilet system at TVW7 was still on Septic Tanks, at one time it was totally blocked. When the pipes were dug up, it was found that they were obstructed by large numbers of condoms!]

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

See Appendices for full interview on this subject.

PH: What did that mean in those days?

GC: Oh, I don't think it meant anything. I don't think that it meant anything.

[Interruption – tape switched off]

PH: There wasn't any such thing?

GC: Certainly not like it is today. I mean it's a different ball game now. I think everybody's got to be on their toes. You have to be careful what you say to – some of these women are fine, they handle it and they deserve their own equal place in the world but some get fired up and some are, I don't know, it's stupid about the way they go about it. But. No, in those days I never had a problem. I've always worked for women. Yes, I mean Coralie Condon, Marion,

PH: Were you ever seriously harassed by any of them?

GC: Constantly! No, no, not that I ever recall. In fact, I've worked for women a lot in the media and today, going back at 6PR the General Manager was Sheri Gardener and she's back there now as Program Director so I'm still working for her, in effect.<sup>103</sup>

John Crilly started working at GTV9 as a Stagehand on 4 January 1959. He is currently Production Manager at TVW7 and I asked him, '...what about sexual discrimination or harassment. Either observed or experienced?' to which he replied,

J.C. Oh I see a bit of it around. Ah, would like to think that I've never been discriminate in any way myself...and if you're talking about the gender part of it I've always said to people; I've clashed with a few people who were women, who didn't have a problem with me but had an issue about men in general, particularly in this building and I've said, 'Hey! You could be black, white, brown, brindle. bloody male, female, ah homosexual, lesbian, whatever you want to call it does not make any difference to me as you, I think you are the right person for the job. That's how I've always felt. The same with racial discrimination. I don't discriminate against anybody.

PH: You've been here a long time, has anybody ever come to you with problems of harassment?

JC: Yeah one in particular, but, unfounded as far as I was concerned and in that person's case, she was a very strong willed woman that ah, but she turned, she used her female side of things to her advantage. She could turn it on when she wanted to and she did. And she accused everybody else of being bloody pigs or whatever else but she was exactly the same...I haven't had a huge problem with it.

PH: It has become a lesser issue today than it was ten years ago?

JC: Yes, I think so...in this building alone we've got the three past *Telethon* Managers [who] have been women and very good solid businesswomen.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Gary Carvolth, interview 2000.

<sup>104</sup> John Crilly, personal communication, interview, 2002.

Peter Dean, former STW9 and TVW7 Presenter was a Junior Clerk in the Taxation Department aged fifteen in 1955. After five years of auditioning he was given a job on Radio 6VA Albany. He was hired by STW9 as Booth Announcer and News-reader in late 1965. He later joined TVW7 and remained with them till 1996.

PH: Women and the 'glass ceiling'?

PD: I think it's a myth. Women in the media, the women I've seen in the media, if they want to do something they can do it...No, there's no holding them back...I know in those very early days you had Audrey Barnaby. Very good, very pleasant, but if you stood in front of her she'd bowl you over! And the same with Stephanie Quinlan and with Jenny Clemesha...they would, they'd walk over you.<sup>105</sup>

Peter Duncan was a P.M.G. trained technician who joined GTV9 Melbourne as a Trainee Technician in 1960 aged seventeen. He was a Director at STW9 for many years before setting up a successful private company making television commercials. He sees that there were always opportunities for the right people in any capacity.<sup>106</sup>

On-air Entertainer Max Kay said, 'True talent will out anyway. There are not many truly talented women – or barristers for that matter – sitting at home nursing babies! For instance Oprah Winfrey contradicts the whole theory!' and '[there is]...discrimination of Scottish accent and other ethnic sounding accents.'<sup>107</sup> Former STW9 audio technician Graeme Greenwood had not heard the expression 'the glass ceiling' and in regard to sexual harassment he said, 'Never! We were a happy family.'<sup>108</sup>

### **Women in the News, Sports and Weather Departments:**

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<sup>105</sup> Peter Dean, personal communication, interview, 2001.

<sup>106</sup> Peter Duncan, personal communication, interview, 2000.  
See Appendices for full comments.

<sup>107</sup> On-air Entertainer Max Kay, personal communication, interview, 27 June 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Graeme Greenwood, personal communication, interview, 26 June 2002.

News is one area where the physical and cultural isolation of Western Australia can be seen to have been instrumental in the early entry of women into this facet of Australian television. It is claimed that TVW Channel 7 was the first in the nation to employ a female reader of the general nightly News bulletin.<sup>109</sup> Resistance to such change was examined by Janet Thumin who wrote, 'By the mid-60s...the institution [in Great Britain] necessarily addressed an audience including women...yet at the same time the female presence on screen was carefully contained.'<sup>110</sup> and 'I find in the later 1950s many careful interventions intended to raise the profile of women on television. But more often than not these foundered on the rocks of convention and prejudice...'<sup>111</sup>

The question of acceptance of women's role as journalists in British television whereby gender ostracism prevailed was exemplified thus, 'Women in this environment she [Linda Steiner] suggests had to struggle for their definition as professionals, since their male colleagues defined them *first* as women and only *second* as journalists, typically inviting them to write *as women*.'<sup>112</sup> However, Cruthers states that this was not the case in Western Australian television due to the fact that senior management came from a local newspaper industry where women had long been accepted in their own right.<sup>113</sup> Women were 'Graded' according to length of service and experience under the auspices of the Australian Journalists Association.<sup>114</sup> During World War II, James Edward Macartney (although on active military service) maintained his position as Managing Editor of the Perth *Daily News*. He instituted a policy of employing women as general reporters. Prior to that their activities had been restricted to the coverage of social events. Although Schudson said that,

Eleanor Roosevelt had a devout following of women reporters who tried to protect her. In 1933 Mrs. Roosevelt leaked to four women reporters the news that President

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<sup>109</sup> Sir James Cruthers, personal communication, interview, 3 June 1999. [The reader was Pam Leuba.]

<sup>110</sup> Janet Thumin, 'Mrs. Knight *Must* Be Balanced. Methodological problems in researching early British television', in *News, Gender and Power*, edited by Cynthia Carter. Gill Branston and Stuart Allan, Routledge, London, 1998. P.91.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*, p.93.

<sup>113</sup> Sir James Cruthers, 13 April 1999.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, telephone interview, June 2003.

Roosevelt had refused to sign a joint proclamation by Herbert Hoover to close the banks the day before the inauguration.<sup>115</sup>

the situation in the United States was still much the same after World War II for women journalists.

Before the 1960s, women journalists wrote about fashion and society – and rarely anything else. The National Press Club only admitted women in 1971. In 1966, the Chicago bureau chief for *Newsweek* could turn down a woman reporter from UPI for a job, explaining that “I need someone I can send anywhere, like to riots. And besides, what would you do if someone you were covering ducked into the men’s room?” That would be hard to get away with today.<sup>116</sup>

In the years following the cessation of hostilities in World War II, women maintained their positions reporting on the Police Courts and other matters formerly the domains of the male journalists, as well as performing the duties of sub-editors.<sup>117</sup> The initial impetus of hiring women journalists did not have its roots in equality. The reason was the same one that impelled females to replace absent male servicemen in many industries. At West Australian Newspapers the practice was accepted and in the Editorial Department the policy of equal opportunity was maintained. However, women who were contemplating marriage were required to resign their occupations and this custom was carried through with the establishment of TVW 7.<sup>118</sup>

With the exception of one female, Cornelia Francis, at STW Channel 9 the news-readers were all male for at least six years after the start of transmissions in 1965<sup>119</sup> and female journalists were always given the ‘fluffier’ assignments.<sup>120</sup> In this, STW9 was more closely identifiable

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<sup>115</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1995, p.86

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.176

<sup>117</sup> Sir James Cruthers, 3 June 1999. [It was noted that the first sub-editor was Peg Sanderson later Telford.]

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Terry Spence, former News Director STW9, personal communication, interview, 27 April 1999.

<sup>120</sup> David Gladwell, former news journalist and presenter STW9, personal communication, interview, 4 May 1999.

with then prevailing world attitudes. Mellencamp observed that in the United States of America, 'Given commercial Tvs...[four deficiencies are noted, then] (5) dominance of white male characters on the news in particular but also in entertainment...' <sup>121</sup>

It is an incontrovertible fact that there exists to the present time a differentiation in acceptability (in chronological terms) between the outward appearances of male and female presenters. A fifty-plus years of age man has always been seen in the light of maturity and reliability, whilst a woman of the same age is assessed by her photogeneity. Jenny Dunstan said, 'When I was working out at Ten [NEW10, 1998] Channel Ten in News...comments were made to me about age, you know, there is only so long in the industry as a female. And you know it really peeves me and still does to this day.' <sup>122</sup> In the USA, women TV journalists have been fired because, according to their management, they were getting too old to appear on screen. <sup>123</sup> In Australia reference to discrimination was made as early as 1976, when TV presenter Pat Lovell, guest-speaking at a Women's Symposium said, 'My part in today's discussion is to outline sex discrimination in television.' <sup>124</sup> In 2003 Dixie Marshall who is half of the STW9 female news-reading team said:

There's no doubt it [the glass ceiling] exists, but that is partly due to nature...women have to step out of the industry to have their children, and often it is difficult, if not impossible to step back in. The industry, therefore, loses a huge well of amazing talent...and management remains a club for middle-aged, middle-classed men... whose thoughts and beliefs are not always representative of the community. <sup>125</sup>

On discrimination and harassment she answered, 'Not personally...but given there are no women in positions of power in stations around the country, it would seem discrimination is

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<sup>121</sup> Patricia Mellencamp, (ed.) *Logics of Television essays in cultural criticism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1990, p.4.

<sup>122</sup> Jenny Dunstan, former TV Presenter and Independent Producer, personal communication, interview, Subiaco, 18 August 1999.

<sup>123</sup> Liesbet van Zoonen, 'One of the Girls? The changing gender of journalism', in Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston and Stuart Allan (eds), *News, Gender and Power*, Routledge, London, 1998, p.46, op.cit., L. Ellerbee, *And So It Goes: Adventures in Television*, Berkely Books, New York, 1986.

<sup>124</sup> Pat Lovell, 'Case Study No.3 Women and the Media, Panel: Gillian Waite (Moderator), Patricia Edgar, Pat Lovell, Anne Summers' in *Mass Media in Australia*, edited by G. Major, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1976, p.133.

<sup>125</sup> Dixie Marshall, current [2003] STW9 news presenter, written communication, 29 October 2003.

alive and kicking.’<sup>126</sup> Current [2003] television journalist Rex Haw views the subject from a different perspective:

I have some issue with the ‘glass ceiling’ in the TV news industry. It’s been my experience in various news rooms across Australia that most women who come into the industry have stars in their eyes. They’re determined to become newsreaders without doing the legwork as journalists. Others are into the power game and gravitate towards positions as news producers where they quite often unfairly, and certainly unprofessionally exert power and authority over male staff members, many of far more experience, qualifications and ability than the woman concerned. I find that most men in the industry simply want to do the best job they can do on the day. Women are more obsessed with their image and power. I have not encountered this in any other industry.<sup>127</sup>

Concerning discrimination and harassment Haw said:

Yes, there is a prevailing form of ‘reverse’ discrimination in our industry. People, mostly men, who are good at their jobs, and deliver the goods daily etc., are the most unlikely to get promoted. Their managers prefer to keep them down, keep them on the road because they are delivering a good product. It’s quite common for totally incompetent people, even people with no experience at all, to be given the top jobs as news producers, and in some case news directors. Age discrimination is another factor. Highly experienced people, mostly men are overlooked in favour of someone much younger, who has nothing going for them other than a pretty face.<sup>128</sup>

Former STW9 newsreader (when that station was on at least equal terms with TVW7) Russell Goodrick wrote:

I never really believed it was a glass ceiling/ just a mates ceiling. These days they call it the grey ceiling. In the three year that followed my leaving Channel 9 News in 1985 I tried unsuccessfully to find a new news position in Perth. I felt and heard that the word had been put out not to employ me. I was a loyal servant who went out of his way to make a success of whatever we did. After Terry Spence left the position [New Director] a former producer wasn’t interested in my ability calling me yesterday’s man. And on another occasion too old. Too old? Hell I wasn’t even 45. In most countries age is respected. Why couldn’t I, a Logie Award Winner with 6 years being number one get another job reading news. It certainly wasn’t my attitude or ability, or a demand for high wages.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Rex F. Haw, current television, journalist, written communication, 30 October 2003.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Russell Goodrick, former STW9 newsreader, written communication, 15 December 2003.

In recent years Goodrick has conducted a successful business producing ‘infomercial’ programs for STW9. He noted:

And certainly in future years within my own company women had great opportunity. My Production Manager, Field Manager, Office and Administration managers were all women. Ninety per cent of presenters were also women. In fact, to try to make our shows more balanced I went out of my way to invite men into studio screen tests.<sup>130</sup> Former TVW7 News Director Darcy Farrell remembered that the first woman news-reader (Pam Leuba) was not an anomaly. Her contemporaries were Katherine Lavam and Pamela Robinson. ‘Three good women, very good women’<sup>131</sup> He also noted the changes to employment ratios, ‘...in public relations and journalism now there is a preponderance of women.’<sup>132</sup> Peter Waltham, a former long time news-reader on both TVW7 and STW9 said ‘...there was no chauvinism.’<sup>133</sup>

Former STW9 News Director Terry Spence in answer to the question ‘What do you recall about women in the work-force in 1966?’ said, ‘In News a minority – a rarity...our first female reporter...between ’66 and ’71...was a lady called Kit Harding...would have been not only the first woman journalist employed there but the only one for quite some years.’<sup>134</sup>

She did general reporting but let me say and I don’t mind admitting it now, this is all retrospective, there’s no doubt about it, women were pointed in the direction of certain stories. ‘That’s a woman’s story’ You wouldn’t obviously today – you’d be at some risk by suggesting it today! That’s discriminatory you know. Well with some reservations! There are naturally some stories that women bring a different touch to and can often gain the confidence in fact of people in distress – women in distress. No, she was a general reporter but obviously steered in the direction of stories which might suit a woman.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Darcy Farrell, personal communication, Interview, 28 July 1999. [Lloyd Lawson spoke of Barbara Robinson who did some hostessing and was a weather-girl.]

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Waltham, former News-reader TVW7 and STW9, personal communication, Interview, 22 August 1999.

<sup>134</sup> Terry Spence, Former News Director STW9, personal communication, interview, 27 April 1999.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

Frances Foster was the one woman in the STW News Department in 1965, who not only acted as personal secretary to the News Editor, but was also required to type the actual scripts to be read as bulletins. She was also called upon to splice film for News items, operate backlit 'primitive' weather-maps, and operate the Auto-Cue machine.<sup>136</sup> Channel Nine's first main bulletin woman news-reader Valerie Davies was not employed until 1973. She was a newspaper journalist before becoming a newsreader, reporter and current affairs host at STW9 and said, 'Many issues surround people achieving to their highest potential – women like men will continually need to assess goals in light of seeking a balanced life.'<sup>137</sup> and had no recollection of discrimination.

At TVW7 it would seem that a real sense of acceptance (if not equality existed) and was necessary for smooth functionality in television news-rooms. In reply to a question on the 'glass ceiling', a long time News-room Secretary 1974- said, '[it] doesn't bother me.'<sup>138</sup> and concerning sexual discrimination or harassment answered, 'No. Not offended by any remarks. How could I be with a nickname of Boobs?'.<sup>139</sup> To the same question, concurrent [2001] TVW7 News Director noted, 'Every day in a News-Room!'<sup>140</sup> A former newsreader wrote that in the 80s, '...On the subject of indecency one management figure would constantly ask new women if they wanted a ----. He believed it was a percentage game and didn't care if he offended anyone.'<sup>141</sup> As in most walks of life, the perception of and acceptance or rejection of facets of life experiences is a personal thing. It can be concluded that women were offered the chance to be 'one of the boys' and those who fell in with that position became just that. In 1994 Catherine Lumby wrote,

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<sup>136</sup> Frances Foster, former STW9 Secretary, written communication, 27 August 2001. [Ms. Foster was replaced by Kay Aubrey who left television to become an air hostess. She was killed in the crash of a Vickers Viscount near Port Hedland on New Year's Eve 1969.]

<sup>137</sup> Valerie Davies, former STW9 Newsreader, written communication, 1 July 2002.

<sup>138</sup> Lesley Bradford, written communication, 1 August 2001.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.  
[The information was not tendered in an ironic or rueful context, but merely stated as an accepted matter of fact.]

<sup>140</sup> Robert Goodall, News Director, written communication, 11 July 2001.

<sup>141</sup> Russell Goodrick, 2003.

Female journalists in training are often amused by the macho rhetoric which permeates newsrooms. Good news is 'hard' news rather than 'soft' news, reporters talk about 'getting a good story up' and feature writing is often maligned as slightly effeminate 'fluffy' practice. There is no question that traditional news values split both format and content along traditional masculine and feminine lines. Facts, objectivity and the public sphere belong to men. Women line up with feature writing, subjectivity or domestic issues. It's a rhetoric, however, which is entirely contradicted by contemporary practice.<sup>142</sup>

Susan Contos, former female prime time news-reader (1976-78) agreed that the newsroom was not a place for the easily offended. 'Everybody outside the station always thought there was [glamour in working at a TV Station] and I would imagine they still do...but within the walls out come the insecurities of so-called 'talent', backstabbing, kissing 'arse' and down right sleaze.'<sup>143</sup> On the 'glass ceiling' she said 'Unaware of this expression'<sup>144</sup> and in regard to sexual discrimination or harassment, 'Besides the little innuendos and station gossip not much to report....If you call only giving the 'female' soft soapy stories, no hard hitting news items.....then yes, saw, experienced, did and suffered.'<sup>145</sup>

Alison Fan, a current long time journalist (1970 -) said of the 'glass ceiling', 'It's there to be crashed through by any woman who is competent; ambitious and is willing to sacrifice family, personal life and happiness.'<sup>146</sup> On 'Sexual discrimination or harassment' she observed, 'Yes – but I handled it myself.'<sup>147</sup> Fan's attitudes can be seen in the context of her employment. The television news-room reflects individuality and toughness. She has the reputation of being as 'hard' as any man and as evidence of that, she was the one chosen by the perpetrators of the 'Great Mint Robbery' (for which the Michelberg brothers were incarcerated) to handle the story of the return of the gold.<sup>148</sup> It can be reasonably assumed that

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<sup>142</sup> John Hartley, *Popular Reality Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture*, Arnold Publishing, London, 1996, p.32 op.cit.[Catherine Lumby, 'Feminism and the media: the biggest fantasy of all', in *Media Information Australia* 72, 1994 pp.49-54

<sup>143</sup> Susan Saleeba (nee Contos), former TVW7 News-reader, written communication, 14 June 2001.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Alison Fan, TVW7 Journalist, written communication, 1 June 2001.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Avon .Lovell, *The Mickelberg Stitch*, Perth, 1993.

the female wishing to succeed in the environment was required to assume the demeanour of her male counterparts.

Mario D-Orazio, is presently the Chief-of-Staff for TVW7's *Today Tonight*, considered that there still is a glass ceiling despite the fact that at the time of interview a woman was Managing Director of the Seven Network.<sup>149</sup> He said that the 'casting couch' disappeared about fifteen years ago. D'Orazio said that today there is a preponderance of women in television News and Current Affairs. 'These days most applicants for jobs are women, and, just in my own department most of the people are women. The Host is a woman! The highest paid people are women...I think that the glass ceiling is breaking down.'<sup>150</sup> He also considers that the public want women on television,

Throughout history, of our medium, women have always been prominent and powerful...today I believe it's being driven very much by the universities. I'm actually critical of some of the university policies here. I think they're actually training too many kids for the wrong jobs...I think there are a bit removed from the industrial reality or the commercial reality of the world. What we're finding is that fewer men want to go into the industry. So when you advertise for a researcher or a chief-of-staff or a production assistant or a reporter...and this is anecdotal...the last two or three years female applicants have outstripped male applicants two to one...In my area which is specialized but it's an important niche in current affairs.<sup>151</sup>

When asked if the morality of those women applying for jobs in charge and/or those in charge of allocating them had changed, he said, 'What I'm saying is that the f..... law has changed! , [laughs] O.K. The law has changed and social values have changed.'<sup>152</sup>

In contrast, according to van Zoonen, in the Netherlands old ill-manners persist and '...many female journalists feel that they are primarily judged as women; they are subject to ongoing comments on their looks and they have to regularly confront friendly heterosexual invitations

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<sup>149</sup> Mario D'Orazio, personal communication, interview, 2001.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

See Appendices for full text.

or unfriendly sexual harassment.’<sup>153</sup> although ‘...number of women in journalism is steadily rising...It must come as no surprise, then, that the transformation of Dutch TV news coincided with a remarkably high number of female anchors: in fact they form a majority.’<sup>154</sup> Great Britain might well be lagging, as in 1997 Brent MacGregor reported,

I asked a female news anchor with a wide range of experience in several British news organisations if she found her profession to be male-dominated. She deflected the question.

I think I’ve always felt an outsider anyway, and I think it’s a very useful thing to be, I think most journalists feel – by the nature of what they are – that they’re outsiders, because they are standing on the side-lines looking on.<sup>155</sup>

He also said that ‘...Gender factors are certainly under-researched in news organisations, which are clearly ruled by a male-dominated ethos.’<sup>156</sup> D’Orazio suggests that such is not the case in Western Australia.

Ex-soldier Terry Willessee joined TVW7 as a Journalist in 1969. He also firmly believes that there was a ‘glass ceiling’.<sup>157</sup>

PH: Ah, yes. Women in the workforce. You just mentioned Tricia Duffield. Is she the only one that leaps to mind as being a prominent reporter at that stage?

TW: Um. Gaynor Thomas also worked with us, former ABC.

PH: And women’s actual place in the workplace. It’s only twenty odd years ago but is there a visible difference there?

TW: Absolutely. I’ve worked on shows that have been produced by women; the executive-producer was a woman. The producer was a woman. A hell of a turnaround.

PH: That didn’t happen then?

TW: No.

PH: There was a ‘glass ceiling’ at Nine?

TW: Well everywhere I think. Not so much at Nine but everywhere I think.

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<sup>153</sup> Liesbet van Zoonen, ‘One of the Girls? The changing gender of journalism’, in Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston and Stuart Allan (eds), *News, Gender and Power*, Routledge, London, 1998, p.37.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p.43

<sup>155</sup> Brent MacGregor, *Live, Direct and Biased Making Television News in the Satellite Age*, Arnold, London, 1997, p.58.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p.57

<sup>157</sup> Terry Willessee, personal communication, interview, Sydney, September 2000.

PH: It might sound a bit 'left-fieldish' but sexual harassment. Have you got any memories of that?

TW: No. No such luck.

PH: Were there any occasions when people –

TW: No. It never raised its head. It was not an issue then.

PH: General decency prevailed? There were general standards?

TW: Yes.

### **Women and TV Sport:**

In commercial television sports reporting has always been dominated by men.<sup>158</sup> General coverage of women's sport is usually fleeting in bulletins with the main emphasis always being on Australian Rules Football, Cricket and Men's Basketball. There was a token woman presenter on Channel Seven's Sunday Footy Show in 1998 Karen Letica rose to prominence in the TVW7 Sports area and contemporary Jenny Seaton said, '...[she] did a great job there in Sport. She had a bit of frustration I think...She's now gone on and has been a producer for the Olympics in Sydney last year and I think she might go on and do the next two.'<sup>159</sup>

Former journalist with *The West Australian*, ABC and STW9 on-air sports presenter Wally Foreman said,

The Glass Ceiling. It was more evident in commercial TV than at the ABC. At the ABC women were promoted into positions prematurely to try and address perceived discrimination. I haven't experienced sexual harassment in the industry. There is no doubt that women have found it difficult to make their way in the sport section of the industry.

This is in part attributable to their lack of familiarity with the sports that are mainly broadcast (eg: cricket, football), However, I think there has been a "blokey" attitude in most organisations that has counted against women. There was also a distinct imbalance in the number of women in senior positions in the industry during my first 20 years. That has improved in the past decade.<sup>160</sup>

Former TVW7 Sports Presenter 1968-1997 John Rogers said,

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<sup>158</sup> Peter Waltham, 22 August 1999.

<sup>159</sup> Jenny Seaton, 2001.

<sup>160</sup> Wally Foreman, former journalist, ABC and STW9 Sports Presenter, written communication, 6 August 2002.

[The glass ceiling]... must have existed then as there were no women involved in any program I did. They were typists etc. but none were involved in production etc. Sexual discrimination and or harassment probably occurred on a regular basis, but in those days didn't have a name & were accepted as the norm.<sup>161</sup>

### **Women and Weather Reporting:**

An early British comment on women and weather reporting said,

Audience Research report in December 1959 floated the question of *Weatherwomen*, noting carefully and (typically) the range and percentage of responses before concluding that, on balance, it seemed an unwelcome idea, though not one that elicited very strong feelings on either side.<sup>162</sup>

It would appear that TVW7 followed that line of thought as its early weather presentation was performed by Vin Walsh, a knowledgeable male with sound academic qualifications, who was regarded as something of an expert on the subject.<sup>163</sup> By 1966 both commercial channels had very personable female presenters, one known for her 'wink'<sup>164</sup> and the other for leather boots, a mini-skirt and a feathered head-band.<sup>165</sup> During the years 1971-72 TVW7 Director of News Darcy Farrell instituted a system of three young women on a rotating basis. 'As weather "girls" we were chosen purely to add a touch of glamour – we knew nothing about the weather so I supposed there's a touch of sexism there...' <sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> John Rogers, former TVW7 Sports Presenter, written communication, 12 July 2002.

<sup>162</sup> Janet Thumin, 1998, p.93.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Ashton, former TV Producer, personal communication, interview, 18 August 1999. The presenter was Vin Walsh.

<sup>164</sup> The presenter Trina Brown, on her first appearance, suffered an irritation in one eye causing her to blink. Brian Treasure thought it was a 'good gimmick' and he instructed her to finish each bulletin in the same manner. The instruction came from Sir James Cruthers, telephone communication, 13 December 2003.

<sup>165</sup> The presenter was Veronica Overton. STW9 had adopted a total station advertising gimmick as being Big Chief Channel Nine.

<sup>166</sup> Meryl Bennett, TVW7 Presenter, written communication, 11 June 2001.

Following the preference for women presenters, the gender choice swung back to the males with Seven's (the late) Sam Kronja introducing a more flippant approach during the years 1973 to 1982.<sup>167</sup> This was copied at STW9 by ex-Sydney TV actor Barrie Barkla. In 2003 the presenters ranged from a young ex-rock musician, through a serious ABC trained late baby-boomer to a mature local television icon. All are males. Their styles and appeal are all linked to the demographic intentions of each particular commercial channel.<sup>168</sup>

### **Women in Tonight Shows:**

Although a number of 'Tonight' type Shows and Quiz Shows programmes have come and gone during the years, there is no remembered instance of a woman being made the 'anchor' person. The low cultural value ascribed to much broadcast material by the self-appointed arbiters of the day was expressed in such terms as '*frivolous, light, distracting mindless* – terms aligned with the 'feminine' rather than the 'masculine' in the parlance of the day.'<sup>169</sup> Although the writer was not referring to Australian television, the comment might not be far off the mark in regard to certain of our male comperes!

'[Australian television has] produced no female culture hero – our only two female figures are transvestites: Aunty Jack and Edna Everage.'<sup>170</sup> Quiz Shows have traditionally been the domain of male hosts and pretty little quasi-anonymous 'barrel-girls' were always on hand to lead on the contestants and point to the prizes. Western Australia did not produce a 'Denise Drysdale' although Stephanie Quinlan and Jenny (Clemesha) Seaton dominated the women's programs for many years.

### **Women in Advertising:**

Television Advertising was another area dominated by males at both commercial television stations. Women's work was mainly typing scripts, running-sheets and preparing traffic logs. Mostly the work was prepared and overseen by men. Female sales persons were unknown in

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<sup>167</sup> Peter Dean, Obituary, *Sunday Times*, Perth, 25 February 2001.

<sup>168</sup> Tod Johnston STW9, Michael Schultz TEN and Jeff Newman TVW7.  
Tod Johnston was fired from this position in August 2003 and not replaced. The newsreaders do the job now.

<sup>169</sup> Janet Thumin, 1998, p.95.

<sup>170</sup> Frank Moorhouse, 'Freedom of the Imagination in the Media' in *Mass Media in Australia*, edited by G. Major, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1976, p.21.

the first ten years.<sup>171</sup> In the early days of television, many of the commercial advertisements went to air 'live'. This was usually produced by a male facilitator from the particular advertising agency. Many 'office-girls' were seconded to model shoes, hand-bags and hats, or to point alluringly to a new washing machine or vacuum cleaner and enjoyed the experience!<sup>172</sup> Glamorous young women, hired as 'Presenters' and 'On-Camera Personalities' found that they were expected to also fill a normal office-hours job doing typing or clerical work, not necessarily in the actual Production Department.<sup>173</sup> 'At the time, [1959-1970] there were no full-time women on air, and everyone (women) had to do secretarial work to work 'full time' at TVW7, and had to leave when you married.'<sup>174</sup> Ex-Seven Network El Supremo Maureen Pavlic started her career in advertising.

Former STW9 Advertising Executive Milton Francis (1965-1987) said that Channel Nine was much like any other business in the 1960s and '...that in those days women had their place.' but added that 'If the ability is there the equality should follow.'<sup>175</sup> Women who made a real mark in TV Advertising are few but one such was [deleted] during the 1970s. Channel 9 head Paul Bowen who commenced work there as a Direct Sales Representative in 1973 said,

...an absolute tyrant...she worked in Sales Department as assistant to Mick Mendelowitz. Chain-smoking Alpines, gruff voiced, didn't take any rubbish from anybody; a tough lady and an absolute gem of a person. Just fantastic...and dedicated to her job.'<sup>176</sup>

When asked to recall other outstanding women, the informant found difficulty but was personally assured that there was no 'glass ceiling'. Bowen's views reflect a contemporary

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<sup>171</sup> Peter Conroy, former Sales Manager STW, personal communication, interview, 15 April 1999.

<sup>172</sup> Audrey Long [nee Barnaby] former TV Presenter, personal communication, interview with Patrick Cornish, 27 July 1999.

<sup>173</sup> Veronica Overton-Low, 14 May 1999.

<sup>174</sup> Janet Prance (Gill), written communication, 29 May 2001.

<sup>175</sup> Milton Francis, former STW9 Advertising Executive, personal telephone interviews 5 July 2003 and written communication 29 July 2003.

<sup>176</sup> Paul Bowen, General Manager STW9, personal communication, interview, 18 September 2001.

viewpoint from one still employed at a high level in local commercial television.<sup>177</sup> Current [2003] NEW10 C.E.O. David Fare recalled that when he started at TVW7 in 1984 there were no female sales representatives, but today at his station, two of the four are women.<sup>178</sup>

### **Women in Film Processing:**

Before the advent of videotape, film was the only means of recording outside events for transmission. In 1959 there was no 16mm film processing unit in Western Australia. Film had to be sent to South Australia. This was an impossible situation so Channel 7 set up a suitable enterprise. In 1965 this move was copied by Channel 9 who ‘stole’ Film Editor Geoff Wallace from Channel 7 along with a young operator named Carol. When they subsequently married, she had to resign her position!

Geoff and myself became engaged in 1965. We set a wedding date for April 19<sup>th</sup> 1966. A few weeks before the big day Geoff and myself were called into Bob Mercer’s office and told they didn’t want married couple working there and one of us would have to leave. We considered Geoff leaving but as he was Chief Film Editor. Now they were assured it would be me. They were right.<sup>179</sup>

At Channel 9 there were five young women and a seventeen year old male. This gender imbalance led to the ‘girls’ being in charge of their work environment. In reply to a question regarding sexual discrimination or harassment it was said, ‘Yes, but only in the “Film Room Girls” favour, we used to get away with murder at both stations. (only joking) But yes we were allowed to do pretty much what we liked in a male dominated area of television.’<sup>180</sup> An instance of this was described,

I remember Pearl (my twin sister) Olive Shearer and myself, soaking our film cleaning pads in Freon (a film cleaner which was hydro-carbons) and putting the pads over our noses and inhaling the fumes. It had a pleasant clean smell and it used to give us the giggles. Couldn’t understand Bob Pennell’s shock when he discovered us doing this.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

See Appendices for full text.

<sup>178</sup> David Fare, C.E.O. NEW10 (2003), personal communication, interview, 23 September 2003.

<sup>179</sup> Carol Wallace, former STW9 Film Processor, written communication, 25 July 2001.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

With a shortage of casual staff, in 1959 Channel 7 recruited (by door-knock) women living nearby the Mt. Yokine studios. They were employed to check cinema-type feature films before transmission, primarily to find faults which may lead to film breakages which would cause 'on-air' stoppages.<sup>182</sup> As previously observed, this use of married women during school hours was quite revolutionary in the context of the times, when in most situations; marriage for women meant socially enforced retirement from the work-force. All News was shot on film until the advent of portable video cameras and associated equipment in the early 1980s, when the Film Departments became redundant.

### **Women in the 'Technical' Area:**

For many years the work of cameramen [specifically designated], lighting and sound engineers, central control and transmission technicians, was absolutely male gender specific. At STW9 in 1965 there was a female secretary (Helen Mumme) and three female assistants who carried out duties such as loading film and slide projectors. Formerly a legal secretary, Helen joined STW9 aged 20 before they went on-air. She commented :

I was Secretary to the Chief Engineer. Because of the way things happened at the very outset of transmission many of us were asked to do things which we had no idea of doing. So much was produced in the studio and many staff were asked to 'just fill in' doing whatever was required. This was anything from 'vision switching' to a bit of modelling, or just part of an 'audience'.<sup>183</sup>

said in regard to the 'glass ceiling', 'It would be nice if it had disappeared but mostly it has only been 'raised' a little.'<sup>184</sup> Concerning the second question she said, 'Nothing that was not usual for the era. I do remember being told that women could not be studio camera operators. There were very few females in the Engineering area or in positions of power and authority in Production generally.'<sup>185</sup> Former telecine and tape operator Bevan Long agreed. 'There were no females in positions of power or influence that I was aware of.' and 'Very much a status

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<sup>182</sup> Sir James Cruthers, 1999.

<sup>183</sup> Helen Mumme, written communication, 28 November 2003.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

hierarchy by management team. I was always taken by the down to earth attitude of the on-air talent.’<sup>186</sup> One of the other females in Engineering was Wendy Weir, a twenty year old supermarket worker who met STW9 engineers Vic Kitney and Cedric Woods when they came to purchase milk. A visit to the transmitter led to an offer of work and she was appointed to the position of Telecine Operator, with absolutely no experience. She said that,

I have never had a problem with the “Glass Ceiling”. All should have the opportunity to achieve.’ During my time at Channel Nine...quite often being the only female in our Dept, there would be jokes played out – but it was all in fun and meant that way (these days it would be called harassment – I had no complaints then or now) I only came across one man who wasn’t too happy having females in engineering...The engineering gang named me Bessy Broad-bum.’<sup>187</sup>

In the sixties at TVW7 the Engineering Department didn’t want women and this created a problem. Their main contention was that ‘...women have difficulty in handling weighty equipment.’<sup>188</sup> A former Chief Engineer did not correlate the term ‘glass ceiling’ with women. He said, ‘During my lengthy time [1960-1990] in the industry, if you were capable you were promoted.’<sup>189</sup>

Bill Bowen, a former Station Manager recalled the situation differently and claimed that at one stage he had to ‘force’ the acceptance of a female ‘boss’ in the Technical Area.<sup>190</sup> In the early 1980s, Bill Bowen wanted to appoint a woman to control a new computerised section, above her fellow male tape-operators. Objections were raised along the lines that she might get married and leave. Bowen said ‘She might be here till sixty-five too!’ When the woman was appointed Duty Director of the Central Control Area, an engineer said that she was ‘... not a good team leader...the crew won’t take direction from a woman!’<sup>191</sup>

I think she sorted them out in the first twelve hours. She went up to everyone of them and said, “I don’t give a f... what you say, I’m the boss, you do as you’re told, we’re

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<sup>186</sup> Bevan Long, former telecine and tape operator, written communication, 29 October 2003.

<sup>187</sup> Wendy Weir, written communication, 2001.

<sup>188</sup> Max Bostock, former TVW7 Chief Executive, telephone interview and written communication 8 June 2001.

<sup>189</sup> Vic Kitney, written communication, 2001.

<sup>190</sup> Bill Bowen, former Station Manager STW9, personal communication, interview, 7 September 1999.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid  
See Appendices for full text.

here to do a shift. But they all knew what she was like and they respected her because she was a highly competent Operator. So, the guys had no real problem. So Gwen was then, I think the first Duty Director, female. In Australia. This was really before women started to wave their arms and move their arse around and what-have-you to demand equal opportunity.<sup>192</sup>

Bill Bowen also gave a reason for the late entry of women into the technical area as being to do with the weight of technical equipment. With the miniaturization of cameras, this was no longer an obstacle to change. The incumbent [2003] Chief Engineer (who started as an audio operator at STW9 in 1967) said,

The whole “gender balance” initiative is nonsense in my opinion. In this industry I’ve never doubted that if you could do the job, you got the job and that’s been my policy as an employer as well. It’s fair to say, however, that in 1967 there was less initiative from females to take command.<sup>193</sup>

Former STW9 Master Controller Eddie Townsend said about sexual harassment, ‘There was none then, not by us. By some members of the staff I suppose but (laughs)...’

### **Women in Other Roles:**

In June 1965 when STW9 first went to air, their Publicity and Public Relations Department was placed in the capable hands of two women.<sup>194</sup> One of these was June Filmer (later Holmes) who eventually became Programme Manager. She had a background in advertising and sales promotion with West Australian Newspapers. Her initial duties including the preparation of a weekly program book for dissemination to the print medium and looking after visiting ‘stars’<sup>195</sup> ‘...I don’t think it was an uncommon thing for women to be publicity managers. Or they used to be called Publicity Officer.’<sup>196</sup> After twelve months she was seconded to the position ‘...secretary come General Assistant to the Program Manager.’<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Angus D. Slater, Chief Engineer STW9, written communication, 2 July 2001.

<sup>194</sup> June Holmes, [formerly Filmer], former Publicity and Public Relations Officer and subsequently Program Manager of STW9, personal communication, telephone, 3 May 1999, interview, 1 September 1999.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid

Although still employed and active in the business world, June Holmes replied to the question ‘What does the phrase ‘glass ceiling mean to you?’ ‘Nothing, never heard of it.’<sup>198</sup> The explanation ‘...It’s a feminist phrase used for the fact that women can’t aspire to be ‘the top’ because in all lines of business there’s a ‘glass ceiling’ that they can’t get through.’ Holmes replied, ‘No. Never heard that term.’<sup>199</sup> She described how General Manager Laurie Kiernan (1970-1984) ‘...made a very special effort to make the senior women feel and play an important part in the managing of the Station...the first thing he did when he came in was ensure that we had superannuation and that I believe was ahead of its time.’<sup>200</sup>

PH: So were you paid the same as the men for the same job?

JH: Very hard to say ‘the same job’ because as I said I was assistant to Tom [Warne]. I was not involved in any production. Essentially I was just a ‘senior’ office administrator. SO. Men in those days were not called office administrators. They were either a Tape Operator or a Director’s Assistant or a Director or you know, Chief Engineer – they all had titles. Whereas in my case I was given the title of Assistant of the Program Manager but it never put me into a level the men were and no, I certainly wasn’t paid the same as what, you know, another man of the same talents was paid.<sup>201</sup>

Her starting salary was thirty-five dollars per week. On sexual harassment in the early years she said, ‘Not that I suffered any sexual harassment. I believe – I know that there has occurred in the nineties, there have been harassment cases...in television...on the East Coast as well as on the West Coast. And some of them went to court.’<sup>202</sup> When asked ‘Did you ever hear of any cases involving getting jobs as far as sexual favours are concerned? Particularly ‘on-air’ ones?’ Holmes replied, ‘Not at Channel Nine. No.’<sup>203</sup>

Ruth Huckstep, the woman in charge of the STW9 Publicity Department was also

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> June Holmes, personal communication, Interview, 1999.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

responsible for Continuity. It was her responsibility for collating the advertisements, commercial continuity, in other words making sure that the scripts that arrived from the agencies or the sales people, because in those days there were a lot of graphics and voice-overs for commercials. 'In the early days she did everything! So her task was to make sure that they had, they were lined up with the Log.'<sup>204</sup> At Channel 7 the canteen staff was predominantly female but at certain times a male was Manager. In 1968 Lorraine Shaw was a 33 year old 'housewife'<sup>205</sup> when she started working in the TVW7 'cafeteria'. She remained there until 1991 and for the last six years 'was in charge.' It was a 'good place for working, all friends.'<sup>206</sup> She had no comment to make on the 'glass ceiling' and her observed or experienced encounters with sexual discrimination or harassment were 'None!'<sup>207</sup> In the 1960s at Channel 9 the canteen staff was all female. Secretaries and typists in administration and accounts were always females. Former STW9 secretary Joyce Leigh reflected a more old-fashioned attitude in saying, 'Did not realise women these days were kept down. Personally do not like women in power, prefer males in charge.'<sup>208</sup> Other assistants in those departments and 'Sales' were usually males.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it has been shown that in the field of local 'live' production there was a greater degree of gender equality than in other areas of commercial television and the general business community. This was a combination of the fact that women had attained a greater degree of individuality in the world of theatre and that an attitude of acceptance had been carried forward from the newspaper world by the new management of commercial television. It has also been revealed that there were many women employed in local 'live' production at the start of commercial television, but very few rose to a departmental managerial position.

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<sup>204</sup> Jeff Newman, interview, 3 June 1999.

<sup>205</sup> Lorraine Shaw, former TVW7 Cafeteria Manager, written communication, undated, [2001.]

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Joyce Leigh, 1 September 2003.

Opinions on the phenomenon termed the 'Glass Ceiling' varied greatly. However, the evidence suggests that advancement in areas of control were more likely to happen to men.

Discrimination in the form of inequality in remuneration was evident when women were paid less for doing certain 'men's' jobs. Regimentation in the matter of dress, strictly applied by management has a certain amount of un-believability today, but this certainly occurred. Married women were not employable, except where it suited the needs of the stations. Memories of sexual harassment varied from those who experienced it and those who were adamant that it did not occur. As doubtless occurred in most fields of endeavour where the two sexes were brought into close constant contact, it can be safely concluded that in the television industry, improper overtures depended on individual assessments by men as to whether or not their advances had any chance of success.

Women were absent from the field of advertising sales, occupying the positions of secretaries and typists for many years. Women were accepted to a greater degree in the News area and female presenters were part of the television scene on TVW7 from shortly after its inception. The following chapter will examine the last remaining bastion of local 'live' production, the News.

Peter Harries March 2004

