



**F**igures released in the Oct. 27 issue of *Woman's Day* magazine highlighted some of the changes in women's jobs since females began entering the work force.

Only 2.4 percent of the lawyers in the United States were women in 1937. In 1987, 18 percent are women. Also, the percentage of women doctors increased from 4.6 to 17.6 percent, and the number of engineers increased from 0.3 to 6 percent.

Interestingly, the number of women who are librarians, nurses and social workers has dropped.

It seems women are breaking out of the stereotypes and into fields previously dominated by men.

**O**ne reason women are pursuing jobs in fields other than the

"traditional" women's professions could be their pursuit of higher education. The percentage of college graduates who were women in 1937 was 5 percent, while in 1987 that number has risen to 22 percent. It seems more and more women are looking for something other than an M.R.S. degree.

But entering the job market is only the first rung on the ladder. Once women break into the career of their choice, they still have to deal with conditions on the job. For instance, everyone has a boss at one time or another, but a big question is whether an employee would rather work for a woman or a man.

According to a survey of 16,000 women published in the June 1987 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, 60 percent of the respondents said gender doesn't matter, as long as the boss is fair.

Pat Cornelison, executive director of Humana Hospital in Brazos County, agrees with this view.

"I deal with people as individuals, not by sex, and I think that is the key reason I have never felt people did not respect me just because I am a woman," she says.

**A**nother gripe women often have is that they are paid less than men in the same position. Cornelison says she has never experienced a problem in that area.

"In the company I work for, wages are based on position, and extra consideration is given for years of experience," she says. "Sex really doesn't enter into it at all."

But there are two sides to every story, and some would disagree with Cornelison. Dr. Elizabeth Maret, associate professor of sociology at Texas A&M, says women are not taken seriously as breadwinners in the labor force.

"At home, women are taken seriously as breadwinners," Maret says. "One-half of American families are middle-income families only because of the economic contributions of the wife as well as the husband.

"But in the work force, women are still considered secondary workers by their employers, and there are indications that this situation is not improving."

Maret says one of the biggest indications is the 'feminization of poverty,' a term which describes the trend toward female heads of households living in absolute poverty with their dependents.

**F**or those who have worked in the restaurant

industry, it is easy to understand the difficulty women have making a living in that profession. A waitress works long, hard hours on her feet, and is frequently compensated by below-minimum wages and meager tips.

Maret says waitressing is not the only profession in which women have trouble making a living.

"Even in jobs that are covered by minimum wage legislation, the pay is not sufficient for women to maintain a middle-class lifestyle," she says. "This category includes clerical work, where about one-third of all women workers are. People in this position are called the 'working poor.'"

**B**ut what about the executives? More and more women are entering high-level positions. Unfortunately, Maret says women don't always get high-level wages.

"Texas A&M just undertook a study," she says, "and here in our own backyard there are wage discrepancies that have been documented among professors.

"Even controlling for publications, lengths of time in service and prestige of the degree-granting institution, men professors, fairly uniformly, are making more than the women professors."

**M**aret is not alone in her observations. Several women who responded to the *Cosmopolitan* survey said they also see wage discrimination. One woman who answered the survey has this tale to tell: "I worked for a company that had a rule against employees comparing salaries, so no one

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