
From the editor

QUALITY OF LIFE: A VALUES TRANSFORMATION

Wilma Scott Heide died on May 8, 1985. Dr. Heide articulated to the world a transformative vision—quality of life for all. Dr. Heide cogently and forcefully advocated fundamental changes that would promote health, quality of life, and well-being for all. She lived an uncompromising ethic of excellence in her personal life.¹ Most people knew her as an avid human-rights activist and president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) from 1970–1974. One of her best known works in the nursing literature is the foreword to Jo Ann Ashley's book *Hospitals, Paternalism and the Role of the Nurse*.² Throughout her life she was a leader in creating changes that improved life for countless numbers of people. During her presidency of NOW she was instrumental in negotiating with the American Nurses' Association to take a supportive position in relation to the Equal Rights Amendment. She was a prolific writer and vigorous speaker, conveying a vision of peace and quality of life to thousands who heard her speak and/or read her work.

In her book *Feminism for the Health of It*, Dr. Heide describes the values transformation that she envisioned in relation to scholarship. She defines a form of scholarship that is "action in the human interest," which she named "future-search." She states: "Future-search poses different questions, hypothesizes *what if* possibilities, questions conclusions accepted as 'givens,' challenges the premises and prisms of conventional scholarship and its interrelationships to the human interest." Dr. Heide advocated a consciously value-oriented scholarship that is informed by an ethic that values human life and wholeness, nurturing, peace, qualitative processes, and action in the human interest. For Dr. Heide, feminist scholarship is

based on

a philosophy that envisions elimination of human supremacy based on sex, race, income, religion, age, ethnicity and/or sexual preference. . . . It is disciplined by eschewing:

- fragmentation of knowledge that can weaken thought;
- specialization that avoids connections to wholeness;
- technical "reasoning" that quantifies more and more about less and less so that qualitative processes of life seem nonexistent because they cannot be measured;
- theorizing and generalizing phenomena without concrete applications;
- distancing of oneself from real people so much as to be irrelevant to life or lives.

Feminists insist on unshackling those focused orders of academia which arbitrarily compartmentalize and limit grander visions of human potential.

Dr. Heide projected a number of *what if* possibilities that illustrate her vision of scholarship in the human interest. For Dr. Heide, scholarship, research, action, politics, ethics, and personal choices are all integral to actions in the human interest and cannot be separated from one another if fundamental, life-affirming change is to occur.

Here are a few of my own *what if* possibilities, inspired by Dr. Heide and tailored for ANS readers.

- What if nurses established health care centers where nursing theory and philosophy were enacted in the administration and the delivery of care, with the purpose of demonstrating, refining, and developing nursing knowledge?
- What if all nurses joined together in a strike against carrying out all procedures and policies that interfere with the quality of life?
- What if nurses and clients together formed "think tanks" to define concepts and practices that would create health and well-being for all?

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- What if nurses developed a media network that aired news of events that promote quality of life, dramas that portray nurturing between people and inspire mental and physical health in life styles, and documentaries that educate in relation to human rather than technical developments?
 - What if nurses developed educational programs and institutions modeled totally on humane and nurturing principles and practices?
 - What if nurses engaged in civil disobedience (obedience to conscience) that demonstrated a refusal to accept social practices and policies that destroy the quality of life.

For example, Dr. Heide suggested that "women pee or piss (urinate) at the Pentagon (P.A.P.) to protest the militarization of issues and this nation. This could give new meaning to the phrase 'PAP Smear.' "

In the words of Dr. Heide, "these are just for openers, and I haven't even cleared my throat yet." It is ironic that we accept as "thinkable" the many practices of our academic institutions, the health care system, and

society that destroy or limit quality of life for ourselves and the people we serve, and find it "unthinkable" to pursue revolutionary and transformative shifts toward health and quality of life for all. Why not begin to shift the focus of nursing scholarship and nursing practice to future-search, grounded in a vision of what we need for quality of life? As Dr. Heide states: "The relative economic poverty of women, of feminists [of nurses], need not impoverish our imaginations to prophesize and create a world where the power of love exceeds the love of power."

REFERENCES

1. See *Feminism for the Health of It* by Wilma Scott Heide, and *A Feminist Legacy: The Ethics of Wilma Scott Heide and Company* by Eleanor Humes Haney, both published by Margaret daughters, Inc., Buffalo, NY, 1985. The quotes in this editorial are taken from the prepublication proofs of *Feminism for the Health of It*.
2. Ashley JA: *Hospitals, Paternalism and the Role of the Nurse*. New York, Teachers College Press, 1976.

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