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Women Who Made (and are Making) a Difference

William L. White

When I entered the field of addiction treatment in the 1960s, it was a man's world, and it had been a man's world for more than 175 years. It was a professional arena dominated by male service consumers, male service providers, male administrators, and male policy makers. Women filling such roles were an anomaly, not the norm. That world changed because women pioneers made significant contributions to the history of the addiction treatment field. The purpose of this article is to honor a few of these pioneers who made, and are making, a difference through their research, clinical innovation, public and professional education, public policy advocacy and through their philanthropy. Here are more than sixty women who made and are making a difference in the addiction treatment and recovery arena.

Dr. Andrea Barthwell has served as the Deputy Director of Demand Reduction in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Before assuming this position, she served as medical director of several addiction treatment programs and as president of the board of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Dr. Barthwell is a passionate and articulate advocate for enhanced accessibility and quality of addiction treatment.

Dr. LeClair Bissell is one of the modern pioneers of addiction medicine and the broader field of addiction treatment. Her contributions to the field are reflected in awards from the American Society on Addiction Medicine and the Christopher D. Smithers Foundation. Her publications include *Alcoholism in the Professions* (1985) and *Ethics for Addiction Professionals* (1987).

Claudia Black, PhD, has for more than two decades given voice to the impact of alcoholism on children and the family. She is the author of numerous books, including *It will Never Happen to Me* (1982).

Dr. Sheila Blume is an addiction psychiatrist and long-time advocate for the special needs of addicted women. She served as Director of the New York State Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse and Director of South Oaks Hospital in Amityville, NY and published more than 100 scientific articles on addiction.

Stephanie Brown, PhD, is the director of the Addictions Institute in Menlo Park, CA. and is the author of *Treating the Alcoholic* (1985) and *Treating Adult Children of Alcoholics* (1988) and the co-author of *The Alcoholic Family in Recovery* (1999). Her pioneering work is helping illuminate the stages of personal and family recovery.

Barbara Cimaglio, Christina Dye, Fran Harding, and Janet Zwick are among the more than 20 women who currently direct state departments/offices/commissions responsible for the planning, funding and evaluation of addiction treatment services.

Stephanie Covington, PhD, is a widely acknowledged expert on addiction and recovery among women. She has served as the chair of the Women's Committee of the International Council on Alcoholism and Addiction and has published numerous articles and books, including *A Woman's Way Through the 12-Steps* (1994).

Geraldine ("Gerry") O. Delaney served for years as the Director of Alina Lodge in Blairstown, NJ. To her "students" who had failed to find recovery in other programs, she was known for the toughest of love. One of most charismatic and true characters of the addictions field, her letters were often signed, "G.O.D."

Jan DuPlain was an early public policy advocate for the needs of addicted women. She led the first Office of Women within the National Council on Alcoholism under the banner "Alcoholism is a Women's Issue."

Mathea Falco, Esq., served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters under President Jimmy Carter. She is currently president of Drug Strategies, a national drug policy center and is a frequent contributor to *Counselor*.

Florence R. was the first female member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Her story appeared in the first edition of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939), a title selected after she objected to the proposed title, "One Hundred Men."

First Lady Betty Ford courageously declared to the American public that she had been treated for, and was recovering from, addiction to alcohol and other drugs. She is the driving force behind the Betty Ford Center—a facility that has treated more than 64,000 individuals and adult family members since opening in 1982. Her powerful personal testimony continues to inspire the recoveries of women across the country.

Dr. Ruth Fox was a psychoanalyst who began specializing in the treatment of alcoholism in 1941. She went on to a distinguished career in the alcoholism field, including serving as the Medical Director of the National Council on Alcoholism from 1958 to 1969. In 1954, she founded

the New York City Medical Society on Alcoholism—the precursor to the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Her written works include *Alcoholism, Its Scope, Cause, and Treatment* (1955).

Dr. Vernelle Fox was the pioneering force behind the Georgian Clinic and Rehabilitation Center for Alcoholics that opened in the early 1950s (in Atlanta and Savannah). She served as the Center’s medical director from 1955 to 1970 and made significant national contributions within the re-emerging field of addiction medicine.

Wanda Frog has been a recovery advocate for Native American women and women of color for nearly forty years. Her contributions include the leadership she brought to the National Indian Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NIBADA) and the National Association of Native American Children of Alcoholics (NANACOA).

Edith Gomberg, PhD, is Professor in the Alcohol Research Center, Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, where for more than 20 years she has conducted pioneering research on addiction in women and older adults.

Sarah Graham-Mulhall served as Deputy Commissioner of the State of New York Department of Narcotic Drug Control. She was a visible spokesperson and prolific writer on new patterns of opiate addiction and their treatment in the early twentieth century. Her published works included, *Opium: The Demon Flower* (1926).

Beverly Haberle (Executive Director of The Bucks County Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence and Project Coordinator of Pro-ACT-- Pennsylvania Recovery Organization), **Lisa Mojer-Torres, Esq.**, (civil rights attorney), and **Jeannie Villarreal** (Project Coordinator of Recovering Advocates for Treatment, Vallejo, CA) are part of a new generation of effective recovery advocates. They are included here to honor the women who are leading and working within grassroots recovery advocacy organizations across the country.

Dr. Lucy Hall served as Physician in Charge of the Reformatory Prison in Sherburne, Massachusetts. Her 1880 studies of female inebriates were the first studies to note the existence of domestic violence in the lives of addicted women.

Maya Hennessey is a long-tenured advocate on women’s issues within the addictions field. She is included here to celebrate the contributions and struggles of those women who have served as advocates for women’s issues within the addictions field.

Mary Hannah Hunt headed the Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.

Under her leadership, the WCTU championed mandatory temperance education in the schools and minimum drinking age laws.

Joan Jackson, PhD, conducted pioneering studies in the 1950s and 1960s on the impact of alcoholism upon the family. Her work challenged pejorative characterizations of the wives of alcoholics and charted family adaptations to the progression of alcoholism.

Mary Beth Johnson, Lonna Albright, and **Nancy Roget** are among the women who have assumed leadership roles within the national network of addiction technology transfer centers. Their inclusion honors the growing number of women who are assuming administrative leadership roles within the field.

Charlotte Kasl, PhD, developed the 16-step empowerment model for women in recovery from addiction. She is the author of *Women, Sex and Addiction* (1990) and *Many Roads, One Journey* (1992).

Jean Kirkpatrick, PhD, founded Women for Sobriety in 1975—the first addiction recovery mutual aid society designed specifically for women. Her writings—including *Turnabout: Help for a New Life* (1978) and *Goodbye Hangovers, Hello Life* (1986)—and speeches helped lay the groundwork for the growth of gender-specific addiction treatment in the United States.

Joan Kroc began her philanthropy within the alcoholism field in 1976 with her financial sponsorship of Operation Cork, an alcoholism education program. She provided seed money for alcoholism-related projects for more than 25 years.

Candy Lightner organized Mothers Against Drunk Driving following the death of her 13-year-old daughter in 1980. MADD helped reshape America's attitudes and public policies toward impaired driving and forged the climate in which persons arrested for impaired driving are subjected to mandatory clinical screening.

Lois W. and Anne B. set up a service office in 1951 to support the growing number of family groups that were meeting in conjunction with Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1954, the office was incorporated as Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. Fifty years later, there were more than 32,000 registered Al-Anon meetings in twelve countries.

Marty Mann, the first woman to achieve prolonged sobriety within Alcoholics Anonymous, founded the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism in 1944. Her writings and speeches almost single-handedly laid the groundwork for modern alcoholism education and alcoholism treatment. Her books included *Primer on Alcoholism* (1950) and *Marty Mann Answers your Questions about Alcohol and Alcoholism* (1970). After decades serving

as a public policy advocate, she worked as an alcoholism counselor at Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, Connecticut.

Mercedes McCambridge, famed Academy Award winning actress and alcoholism recovery advocate, testified before Senator Harold Hughes' congressional subcommittee in 1969 in support of the legislation that provided the fiscal infrastructure for modern addiction treatment. She was one of the prominent figures who publicly declared their recovery from alcoholism in the National Council of Alcoholism's 1976 anti-stigma campaign, Operation Understanding. The story of her recovery from alcoholism is detailed in her 1981 autobiography, *The Quality of Mercy*.

Gail Milgram, EdD, is a Professor at the Rutgers Center for Alcohol Studies, Director of the School of Alcohol and Drug Studies, and co-director of the International Schools of Alcohol and Drug Studies. Her special interests include strategies to address alcohol-related problems on college campuses.

Stacia Murphy is one of the nation's leading recovery advocates. She served as the Director of the Alcoholism Council of New York and currently is President of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. She is helping NCADD affiliates across the country recapture their public education and public policy advocacy roots.

Dr. Marie Nyswander collaborated with Dr. Vincent Dole in the development of methadone maintenance treatment in the mid-1960s. Her published works included, *The Drug Addict as Patient* (1956). Her legacy continues through the work of one of her early collaborators, **Dr. Mary Jeanne Kreek**, professor at the Rockefeller University Laboratory on the Biology of Addictive Diseases.

Penny Page is currently responsible for the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies research library. She joins **Andrea Mitchell** (Alcohol Research Group) and **Barbara Weiner** (Hazelden) in a growing group of exceptionally skilled individuals who are infusing information technology into the field of addiction treatment.

Candice Pert, PhD, was co-discoverer of the presence of opiate receptor sites in human nerve tissue—a discovery that illuminated the biological underpinnings of addiction and led to the development of new pharmacological adjuncts in addiction treatment.

Katherine Pike founded the Pasadena Council on Alcoholism in 1949. She and her husband, Tom Pike, were among the most articulate national advocates for community-based alcoholism prevention and treatment programs.

Lillian Roth, famed screen actress, announced in 1946 that she was being treated for alcoholism at the Westchester Sanitarium. She depicted her addiction and recovery experiences in the books *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (1954) (also made into a major motion picture) and *Beyond My Worth* (1958).

Sister Ignatia, the “Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous,” collaborated with A.A. co-founder Dr. Robert Smith in the late 1930s on the development of a five-day inpatient treatment program for alcoholism at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. St. Thomas became the model for many mid-century, hospital-based alcoholism units.

Marjorie Smith edited and published the diaries of an anonymous woman (O.W.) in the 1930s. *No Bed of Roses: The Diary of a Lost Soul* (1930) and *God Have Mercy on Me: From the Diaries of a Lost Soul* (1931) revealed the hidden world of addicted women.

Adele Smithers-Fornaci has, through her roles as president of the Christopher D. Smithers Foundation and president of the board of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, provided leadership and philanthropic support to innumerable projects related to alcoholism and drug dependence.

Phyllis Snyder was appointed director of Chicago’s Alcoholism Treatment Center in 1957 and served in that role for more than twenty years. She was a central figure in the rise of alcoholism treatment as a professional specialty and an influential advocate for the development of city-sponsored alcoholism programs.

Dr. Agnes Sparks was one of the first female physicians to specialize in addiction medicine. Her articles in the *Journal of Inebriety* and other medical journals in the 1890s called attention to the special needs of addicted women.

Nancy Waite-O’Brien, PhD, Vice-President of Clinical Services at Betty Ford Center, represents a new generation of women who have used their tenure of service in the addictions field to assume the highest positions of clinical leadership.

Constance Weisner, Dr.P.H., Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Francisco, is one of the most astute observers of modern addiction treatment. She has studied the evolution of addiction treatment as a system and has helped shape treatment policy by participating in such landmark works as the Institute of Medicine’s *Broadening the Base of Treatment for Alcohol Problems*.

Sis Wenger is the Executive Director of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics. She is a long-time educator and advocate on the special needs of children affected by addiction.

Frances Willard was one of the most powerful and respected leaders of the American Temperance Movement. It was under her leadership that the Woman's Christian Temperance Union began rescue work with female inebriates during the late nineteenth century and called for the creation of special facilities for the treatment of addicted women.

Sharon Wilsnack, PhD, is presently Chester Fritz Distinguished Professor in the Department of Neuroscience, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. She coordinated an international research project on gender and alcohol and served as co-editor of *Alcohol Problems in Women: Antecedents, Consequences, and Intervention* (1984) and *Gender and Alcohol: Individual and Social Perspectives* (1997). Dr. Wilsnack joins **Marian Sandmaier** and **Linda Beckman** PhD, among the modern pioneers whose work brought attention to the special needs of addicted women.

Wyoming Woman was a Delaware Indian prophetess who in 1751 began preaching about the destructive effects of alcohol (“a poison among us”). She set the stage for the rise of many Native American, abstinence-based healing and religious/cultural revitalization movements.

The challenge in writing this article was the lack of space to honor all the past and living pioneers who deserve acknowledgement. I expect many readers to say that I was remiss in leaving this person or that person off the list. I encourage you to write to the Editor of Counselor to call attention to these omissions. Such responses will themselves be a testament to the growing contributions of women to worlds of addiction treatment and recovery.

The field of addiction treatment is no longer a man's world, and it is a stronger field because of it. The story of the role of women in the history of addiction, treatment and recovery in America has yet to be fully researched and recorded. It is time for that story to be told.

William L. White is a Senior Research Consultant at Chestnut Health Systems and the author of *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*.

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