

# NewsBriefs

## FROM GERMANY WOMEN'S BOOK OSCARS

Twenty-three feminist writers were awarded the first "Women's Book Oscars" in October this year at the world's biggest book fair in Germany. An International panel consisting of women from seven countries chose non-fiction books that have "changed the world over the past 25 years." Among the winners were Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Gloria Steinem's *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*.

(*Ms Magazine*  
*January/February 1998 p.17*)

## FROM TURKEY VIRGINITY TESTS AND SUICIDE

Recent suicide attempts over forced virginity examinations by five Turkish girls who were ordered by the director of their state foster home to undergo the test after returning late to their dormitories one night has sparked public outcry. The girls aged 12 to 16 took rat poison and then jumped into a water tank rather than face the tests. Yet, they survived and the virginity tests were carried out in their hospital beds. Women's rights activists and human rights activists are infuriated by such mandated medical examinations. Human rights Minister Hikmet Sami Turk is currently leading a campaign to ban such tests, except in court cases involving sex crimes.

(*Daily Star, Thursday,*  
*January 29, 1998 p.5*)

## FROM THE NETHERLANDS HYMENOROPHY OR RECONSTRUCTING VIRGINITY

According to a report which featured in the British Medical Journal, doctors in the Netherlands are reconstructing the hymens of young women who visit their clinics terrified of the consequences in store when they fail to prove themselves virgins when they marry. Such an issue raises ethical considerations for Dutch doctors who are ready to operate even though there is no medical need for treatment and in the knowledge that they are effectively conspiring with the women to deceive a spouse and his family. The justification is that such an

act saves the women from shame, physical violence, and from possible expulsion from the community. According to some researchers many immigrant groups insist a woman must be a virgin when she marries. "If the bride cannot show her bloody sheet after the wedding night, her family may exact revenge in the form of bloody reprisals and banishment of the bride." "Because of these far reaching consequences, many gynaecologists in the Netherlands are willing to reconstruct the hymens of adolescent girls' who are no longer virgins but who wish to appear so."

(*Daily Star, Monday,*  
*February 9, 1998 p.10*)

## FROM LEBANON PLANS TO RENDER HONOR CRIMES PUNISHABLE BY LAW

In commemoration of the late Laure Moghaizel, Lebanese lawyer and human rights activist, the Lebanese Women's Council organized a conference which was attended by a

crowd of 500. During the celebration Justice Minister Bahij Tabbara declared that he had presented the cabinet with a draft law to render crimes of honor punishable by law. His decision to present the draft law was a token of respect for Moghaizel. "I am convinced that presenting the law at this time in particular expresses the respect and appreciation we all feel to the efforts Laure Moghaizel made with other activists to support women's rights as inseparable from human rights." According to Tabbara, "Giving amnesty to a person who committed a crime of honor only encourages people to take the law into their own hands - an act which no longer coincides with the legal system adopted in Lebanon." Article 562 of the penal code currently pardons a man if he surprises his wife, one of his relatives, descendants or a sister practicing adultery or pre-marital intercourse and kills or wounds one of the two without premeditation.

(*Daily Star, Saturday,*  
*March 7, 1998 p.3*)

## Good Lives | FROM AROUND THE WORLD LAURE MOGHAIZEL RECOGNIZED BY MS. MAGAZINE

- Eugenie Anderson**, 87, Democratic organizer and first U.S. woman ambassador
- Nora Beloff**, 78, British journalist, first woman political correspondent at the observer
- Toni Carabillo**, 71, U.S. cofounder of the Feminist Majority and NOW leader
- Gail Davis**, 71, U.S. actor who played Annie Oakley, trailblazing television cowgirl
- Diana, Princess of Wales**, 36, humanitarian
- Jane Warner Dick**, 91, early advocate for the rights of immigrants and the mentally ill in the U.S.
- Nancy Dickerson**, 70, pioneering U.S. television reporter
- Muriel McQueen Fergusson**, 97, first woman speaker of the Canadian Senate, crusader for women's rights
- Emily Hahn**, 92, U.S. author and adventurer
- Laure Moghaizel**, 68, Lebanese lawyer and feminist activist
- Mumeo Oku**, 101, Japanese suffragist and consumer rights advocate
- Mina Rees**, 95, U.S. mathematician and first woman president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science
- Baroness Seear**, 83, British politician and advocate for employed women
- Betty Shabazz**, 61, scholar, activist, and African American community leader
- Mary Louise Smith**, 82, U.S. Republican advocate for women's and gay rights
- Brigadier Dame Mary Tyrwhitt**, 93, founder of the Women's Royal Army Corps in Britain
- Annie Wauneka**, 87, Navajo medical crusader and first female legislator of the Navajo Nation
- Nancy Woodhull**, 52, U.S. activist-journalist

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