

Different routes to work

By Debbie Landregan
NC News Service

Nancy had her future mapped out. She would finish high school, maybe work a few years and then "get married and have a family."

Sure enough, that's what happened. For four years Nancy was a clerical worker. Then she married, quit her job and became a homemaker, raising two children.

A divorce seven years ago changed all that. After 13 years of marriage, Nancy was forced back into the work force armed only with rusty typing and clerical skills.

Her first years back at work were difficult, Nancy admits. "I was juggling time — trying to work and raising two kids." Coupled with these pressures was the ever-present financial worry of being the sole supporter of her family of three.

About the time Nancy went back to work, Pat entered the job market. Unlike Nancy, however, Pat had a real choice.

"I always dreamed of having a career," Pat said, a dream fueled in part by her mother. "My mother was different. She was a little more into a career than other women of her day. I grew up thinking that having both a career and a family was OK."

When considering marriage, she added, she looked early on "for someone who could see a career and a possible family" combined.

Nancy and Pat are part of a growing number of women in the workplace. According to statistics from the 1980 census, women 16 and older comprise 42 percent of the U.S. labor force. That is up 5 percent from 1970 and a whopping 20 percent from figures available for 1930.

While the two women's stories differ, both women feel that changes in society, such as protection against discrimination, new job opportunities and shortened work hours, are factors important to women trying to balance work and homelife.

And Pat cited down-to-earth financial considerations, for example job-related health and life insurance, as important factors for many women with families who either need to or choose to work outside the home.

Both women spoke of the importance of their Catholic faith and personal convictions when it comes to dealing with the pressures of home or work.

When they consider job opportunities, Pat said she and her husband weigh all the advantages against the effects of the job on their family.

"For us, our family comes first," Pat said. She and her husband recently purchased a home in a Dallas suburb because they thought it would be a good place to raise a family, even though it meant a longer drive to work for her each day.

And Pat has found that religious and personal values are as important on the job as they are at home. In fact, in a situation where her values came into conflict with the workplace, Pat left her job.

Nancy too encountered a situation at work which conflicted with her values.

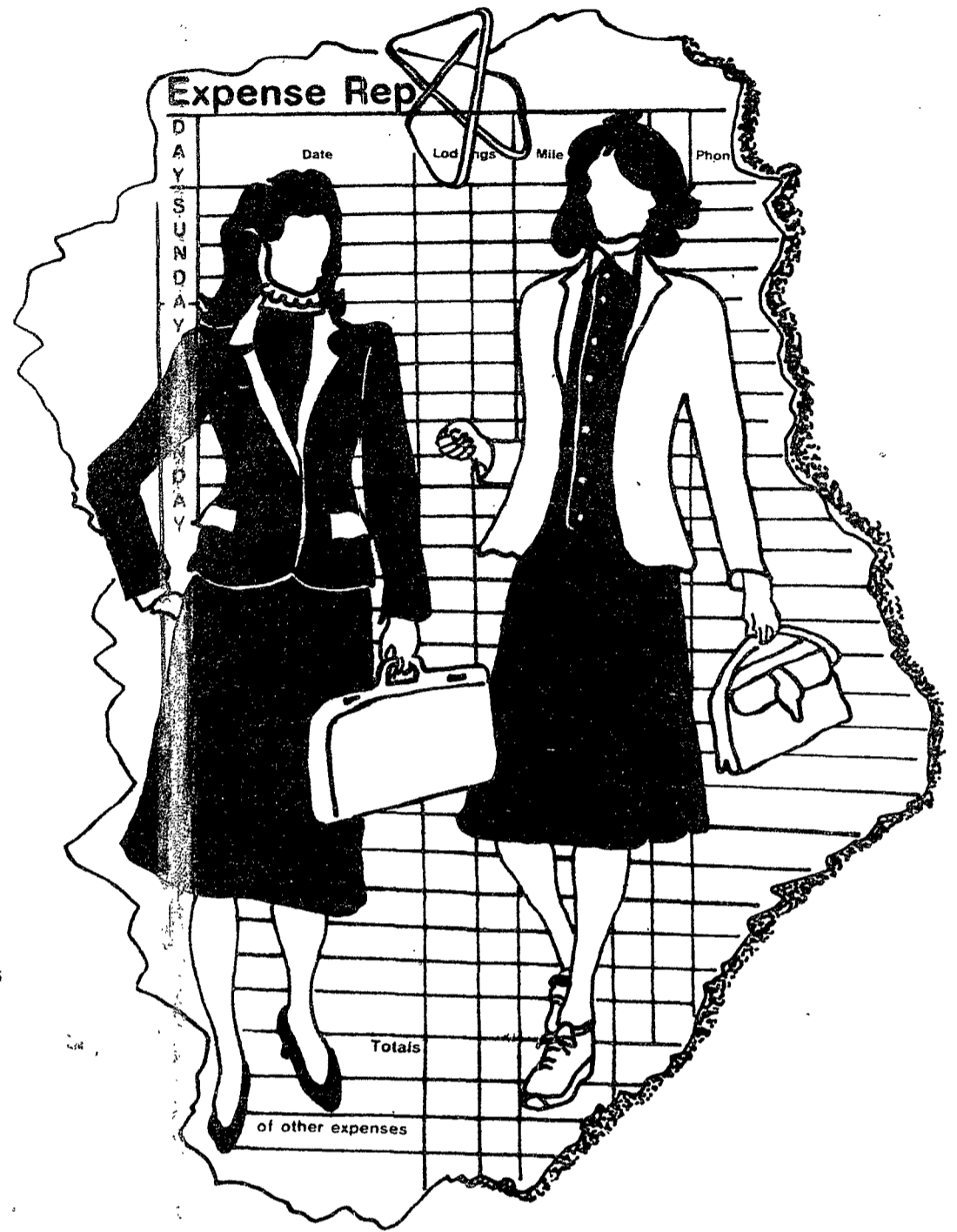
"For a year I felt trapped, to a certain extent. I didn't want to quit until I had something else," Nancy said.

And, Pat indicated, if the work force is to thrive, it is important that people bring values and convictions to it.

For Nancy, faith and her participation in a church-sponsored support group made the transition from homemaker to employee "a whole lot easier."

"I never thought I could do this 10 years back," Nancy said of her responsibilities as parent, provider and employee. "But I found I could do a lot of things that I couldn't before. My faith seems to grow stronger as I grow older."

(Ms. Landregan is editor of the *Texas Catholic*, Dallas, Texas.)



By Katha
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A revolutionary conversation

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

Jesus was considerate. So he probably warned Martha that he was coming to dinner. But whether he let her know beforehand or just dropped in unexpectedly, she was determined to play the model hostess.

Luke's account of this particular visit suggests that Jesus was a rather frequent visitor, almost one of the family. The conversation sounds like the good-natured banter that good friends and family members exchange without fear or giving offense.

In her eagerness to have everything just perfect, Martha was running around in circles, trying to do everything at once — all by herself. With pots boiling over and salad wilting, she reached a point of angry frustration.

She boiled over too.

Here she was, alone with all

this work, and her spoiled little sister was calmly sitting at Jesus' feet engaged in a deep discussion. Finally she burst into the room and said to Jesus: "Tell her to get up and get out here in the kitchen where she belongs."

Knowing she was upset, Jesus was patient. He pointed out, probably with a big grin: "Martha, you're really going to too much trouble. Only one thing is really necessary, and your sister has found it."

Behind this homey little scene lies something that is not homey or little. It is revolutionary. But it is not a put-down of the homemaker's role. That's not the point.

All through his ministry Jesus ran quite counter to his culture's view of women.

The women of Jesus' culture were not much regarded as persons in their own right. A wife sometimes was listed along with a man's property. Sometimes

a daughter was considered a liability.

Jesus did not react to this by putting women on a pedestal in a way that would have been subtly insulting. No, he simply acknowledged women as authentic persons.

Recall the kindness shown by Jesus to the sinful woman at the banquet (Luke 7:36-50). Or recall his delicate acceptance of the woman caught in adultery — as if all by herself — and brought before him by her accusers (John 8:1-11).

This is revolutionary enough. But the incident at the home of Martha and Mary reveals even more. Even more than what he said, what he did was surprising in the culture of his time.

At that time, girls were taught only those parts of the law which pertained to their duties as daughters and wives. No rabbi would dream of accepting a

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