

**T**ired of viewing the world through the eyes of the men behind the ties on network TV? Well unfortunately there have been few alternatives. Up until now. Welcome to *Obviously Women*, a thirty-minute commercial-free show produced, directed and staffed by area women who feel it is time to see Rhode Island through the eyes of Rhode Island women. The THIRD WAVE met with Director Toni Salisbury; Berry Jean Murray, Production Assistant and Interviewer; Carol Dunbar Skoglund, Production Coordinator; and Nancy Harrison, First Camera Operator and occasional News Commentator to discuss the importance of women in the media.

**TTW:** How and why did *Obviously Women* begin?

**TS:** This is run by a group of women called Airwave Women. It started off as a group of women who produced a women's music show at U.R.I. on WRIU...and we still do that. Berry was affiliated with Airwave Women and one day she came up to me and said, "Toni, we're gonna do a t.v. show." And I said, "Oh yeah? What kind of t.v. show?" She said, "I don't know, but I told this woman we would do one."

**BJM:** I heard about public access television and how basically it was a way to get general information out that you wanted to. I did some research to see how really you would get started, and Mary Lou Palumbo's name was given to me. (Mary Lou is Public Access Coordinator at Heritage Cable). It seemed to be the perfect extension of Airwave Women. Another media with the same theme, which is women-affirmative production.

## OBVIOUSLY WOMEN

### An Interview

by Mary Ann T. Rossoni



Berry Jean Murray, Interviewer and Production Assistant, *Obviously Women*

tion for people, give them something new to think about.

**TTW:** What kinds of issues have you addressed?

**C.D.S:** We've had the Women's Resource Center on talking about violence against women. We've had therapists on talking about adult children of alcoholics. We had a show on the homeless, another on religion and oppression. We're trying to be a public service to people to let them know about the resources available to them.

**B.J.M:** Nancy came up with the name *Obviously Women*, and I think it has borne true in that we have a show that hopefully gets out every woman's opinion. Well, we can't do every woman's opinion, but as many types of views on the topic that we would like to display. I would say that we in this room are feminists but not every opinion we have displayed on this show reflects that.

**TTW:** Would you say that a majority of the women in the state do not consider themselves to be feminists?

**B.J.M:** Well, there still seems to be, at least what I see, a common theme of where we are coming from because women do have a perspective of looking at this world and Rhode Island women of how it is to look at Rhode Island. And I think as time goes on, that will be more and more apparent regardless of the socio-economic background that a person comes from. I look at this as a platform to get all opinions out.

**T.S:** We did on-the-street interviews one time in a mall on what women considered to be the number one health issue for women, and one of those interviewed, a young woman, came on and gave a very

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**T.S:** It was just Nancy Harrison, Carol and I who were doing the de-jay-ing at that point...so when Berry came up with the great idea about the t.v. show, the first thing we had to figure out was what was required, how many people...so we begged, and strong-armed and cajoled of course and bribed a few friends into joining us. We got a good core group and then we had to come up with a format.

**C.D.S:** One of the ideas was Obviously Women because we wanted to show women in non-typical women roles. Women soldiers, women carpenters, women welders. To show women in a positive light everywhere doing everything.

Berry Jean Murray, Interviewer and Production Assistant, *Obviously Women*

**B.J.M:** I also see the program being used for a forum to be able to bring out issues of the day not just issues that normally people would think would be a headliner. Something that needs a voice. So every woman can have a voice.

**TTW: Who do you spotlight on the show?**

**N.H:** We try to get as many Rhode Island women as we can. We don't look for someone whose got celebrity status because we don't have to have high ratings. We look for people we find personally interesting and who we think other people will find interesting.

**TTW: Do you feel the show is primarily a networking vehicle?**

**N.H:** Half the battle is getting people information. Inform people, let them know that they have choices about things. Hopefully we can offer to somebody something they didn't know before. A lot of women don't know that there are options for them out there. Just like all of a sudden we're becoming very aware of conservation and recycling. These have been issues for a long time but until it became very public, people were just ignorant of what a desperate situation these issues were. A lot of the same principles apply to women's issues. One of the goals we would like to have is to just be informa-

time in a mall on what women considered to be the number one health issue for women, and one of those interviewed, a young woman, came on and gave a very impassioned plea that was anti-abortion. And those of us that are on the show are all pro-choice, and we looked at each other and said, "Are we going to cut this?" And we said, "No. This is not our philosophy. There are a lot of women in this state who are anti-abortion and that's her opinion and we are going to put it on the air."

**N.H:** When that happened, we had a very involved discussion about it, and I think what it came down to for us is that was the perfect example of what we are talking about here and what we are trying to do. Just because we didn't necessarily agree with this woman's views, she has a right to her opinion.

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## R. I. Women First Seeks Nominees

Secretary of State Kathleen S. Connell and the YWCA of Greater Rhode Island are co-sponsors of the third annual Rhode Island Women First, which will be held March 8 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the State House rotunda.

This year, according to Secretary Connell, Rhode Island Women First will honor the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island as well as women who have "opened doors" for other women.

"The Girl Scouts of Rhode Island, through their actions and philosophy, are helping produce the women leaders of tomorrow," Secretary Connell said.

During the past two years, Secretary Connell has paid tribute to women's accomplishments and advancements during Women's History Month, with a special celebration traditionally held at the State House on International Women's Day, which is observed March 8. This year, due

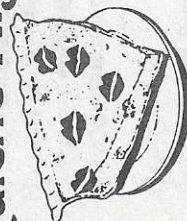
to state budget cuts, the event will be held on the 15th.

In 1989, Secretary Connell, in co-sponsorship with the Advisory Commission on Women, honored more than 60 women achievers. Last year, Secretary Connell, in co-sponsorship with the YWCA of Greater Rhode Island, paid tribute to the women's suffrage movement on the 70th anniversary of women's right to vote in Rhode Island.

On Sunday, January 27, the Rhode Island Women's Political Caucus awarded its Barbara Colt Award to Caucus member Pam Terciero, in honor of her hard work and commitment to women and the Caucus.

Our congratulations to Pam -- An award in Barbara Colt's name is more than an honor!

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photograph by Phyllis Belkin

Carol "Dunbar" Skoglund, Production Coordinator, *Obviously Women*

**OBVIOUSLY--Continued from page 4**

**B.J.M:** We feel we have a responsibility to present things as clearly and precisely as we can. I can't say that some things do not come across in a slanted way at certain times. Some of the women we do choose to have on the show bring up the topics from a feminist perspective. That's the way it happens.

**T.S:** We've assumed that everyone has got a slant, including us. We did a show, we had Annie Milhaven on discussing religion as an oppressor of women. We also had on Episcopal priests who talked about the feminine side of God. We tried to get two of the slants of that particular issue.

**B.J.M:** We had women who are still interested in continuing in the church to change it and women who felt it was hopeless to do so.

**TTW:** Tell me about the show -- what your plans are, the airtime you have to work with.

**C.D.S:** It's a thirty-minute show, but a commercial-free thirty minutes.

**B.J.M:** We are hoping to go to an hour eventually, and that's why we would like to see more people come in with ideas and things that they would like us to do. We've gone from interviews to garden tips, pet tips, book reviews. We also had one woman who we got on the show who actually demonstrated putting a roof on a barn. So it's real diversified. There is a possibility that we may go on beat with a women detective.

are a lot of agencies out there that people really don't know about. They also need volunteers. What we try to do is highlight any women's agency that is interested in coming in and talking about it.

**TTW:** What are your goals?

**C.D.S:** Network...ABC...CBS...(laughs)

**T.S:** We are trying to make the show interesting, to hone our own skills so it looks more and more professional.

**B.J.M:** Doing this has shown me how difficult the media field is. I think it is still difficult for women to get control of the media and to do something that is affirming still in the mainstream media. One of the things we see as a goal for the program is that *Obviously Women* become a reliable, consistent source for information on what's going on with women in Rhode Island. Also a reliable forum for women to try to arrange any types of debates that are germane to women.

So we at The THIRD WAVE suggest you tune in every Monday afternoon- same time (5:30 P.M.)--and same channel (Access Channel A) to catch up on what is important to you, obviously a woman and a feminist woman in Rhode Island. Check the WAVE calendar for programming details.

The women at *Obviously Women* encourage all to write to them with comments, suggestions, and any ideas for future shows. They also need volunteers

**N.H:** Unfortunately, a lot of issues that concern women tend to be tense. Sometimes it seems like the issues we are discussing, the guests that we have, tend to get a little heavy and I think that people do not want to be hearing that all the time. So we try to throw in some of the lighter things, like how to take care of your pet, or a storyteller or local musicians.

**B.J.M:** One of the things also that we are doing right now is running a monthly series program. We are trying to get an umbrella program in some respects. There

with their own video recorders to film local events of concern to women that they may not be able to cover. You can contact them at: **Obviously Women, P.O. Box 5033, Greene, Rhode Island 02837.**

Also involved but not present for the interview were Nancy Meissner, Audio Engineer; Celeste Cavedon, Second Camera Operator; Beth Richmond, *Obviously Handy Woman's Workshop*; and John Dybala, a student intern graphics. *Obviously Women* is filmed on a set donated by WLNETV-6 at Heritage Cable in Wickford, R.I.