she got caught in the crossfire of changing administrations and personalities. I think aging is less of a problem now because the country is not as youth-oriented and the viewing audience is older. And because we've seen

has won a lot of battles, but the war hasn't been won for women. They still have to say 'May I?'

"If Marlene was a man, she'd be Brokaw or Jennings—not Rather, be-

of six books, most recently, Among Friends *(McGraw-Hill paperback). She has a monthly column in* Ms. *magazine and has written for* The New York Times.

WAITING FOR PRIME TIME: THE OUTLOOK FOR WOMEN IN TV NEWS

The picture looked promising for women working in television back in 1971. That was the year Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was extended to broadcasting by the Federal Communications Commission. But when the fanfare died down, many women found themselves in low-paying, dead-end jobs in the white male world of the newsroom—both in front of and behind the cameras.

In 1977, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission issued a critical report entitled "Window Dressing on the Set." The director of information services at CBS admitted in a major survey of broadcast journalism that same year: "I think the main area where we have not done as well is in top and middle management, where the decisions are being made. We need more Marlene Sanderses." That was not to be.

In 1979, the commission concluded that the situation had not improved and urged the FCC to enforce its own rules. That, too, never happened. On the contrary, the FCC soon abdicated its historic role of public trustee and the Civil Rights Commission was defanged. Broadcast standards lost their force and were eventually abandoned.

Despite some highly visible successes, the new era of so-called deregulation (actually regulation as dictated by the market) has been hard on women and minorities in broadcasting. Before the downhill slide, women increased their proportion of the broadcast-news work force—"window dressing" or not—from about one-fifth in 1976 to about one-third in 1981. For the rest of the 1980s, women's gains slowed to one-fourth of their previous average, or 1 percent per year, and that only for white women in their "prime." For other minorities, dubious advance turned into unmistakable rout.

During the seven years of the "deregulation era," the proportion of black women in television news declined from 3.6 to 3.2 percent. Total female minority employment dropped from 5.4 to 5.1 percent. The biggest losers were black men, whose representation on television news dropped from 5.9 to 4.5 percent.

A survey asked members of the American Women in Radio and Television what they thought about their jobs. Most of them said that they were paid less than men for the same work. Those over 46 were the most pessimistic about advancement, equality and power. They were also the most concerned about being perceived as losing competence and value.

Only 8 percent of the members of the Directors Guild are women. In 1986, they directed 11 percent of television programs produced in the U.S. but garnered 24 percent of the nominations for directing awards. The Writers Guild reported that its women writers were paid 70 cents for every dollar earned by its male writers, and the gap held steady throughout the mid-'80s.

A 1987 study by Talentbank Ltd., a national television recruiting firm, showed that in the previous four years the percentage of women news managers declined from 32 to 31 percent. This happened despite the large increase in the total number of news managers and of women graduates in journalism and communications. In other words, a growing pool of qualified women compete for a smaller slice of the pie.

The trade magazine *Broadcasting* also pointed out that women are more likely to be assigned jobs as producers of news shows that don't generate high ratings and ad-revenue dollars—those at noon and on weekends.

Even the most visible part of the picture is deceptive. Connie Chung, Leslie Stahl and Barbara Walters—all over 40—are exceptions to the rule. Two recent studies show that most women anchors are in their mid- and late 20s. They have an average of less than four years' experience and have held their jobs an average of 2.5 years. The most critical barriers to advancement in their careers are physical appearance, sex-based hiring practices and lacking a professional ("old boy") network.

"By contrast," reported Victoria M. Fung in the *Washington Journalism Review* last fall, "the male network anchors seem to get their jobs by being older and grayer. A sample of the men yields an average age of 51 and an average of 27 years in television news. The time these men have served as network correspondents alone—an average of 15 years—far exceeds the average time their female counterparts spent in the business."

Much trumpeted as the entrance of women and minorities had been, their real status is invisible and their exit is mostly silent. More credit to those who blow the whistle!

—*GEORGE GERBNER, PH.D.,*
Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania