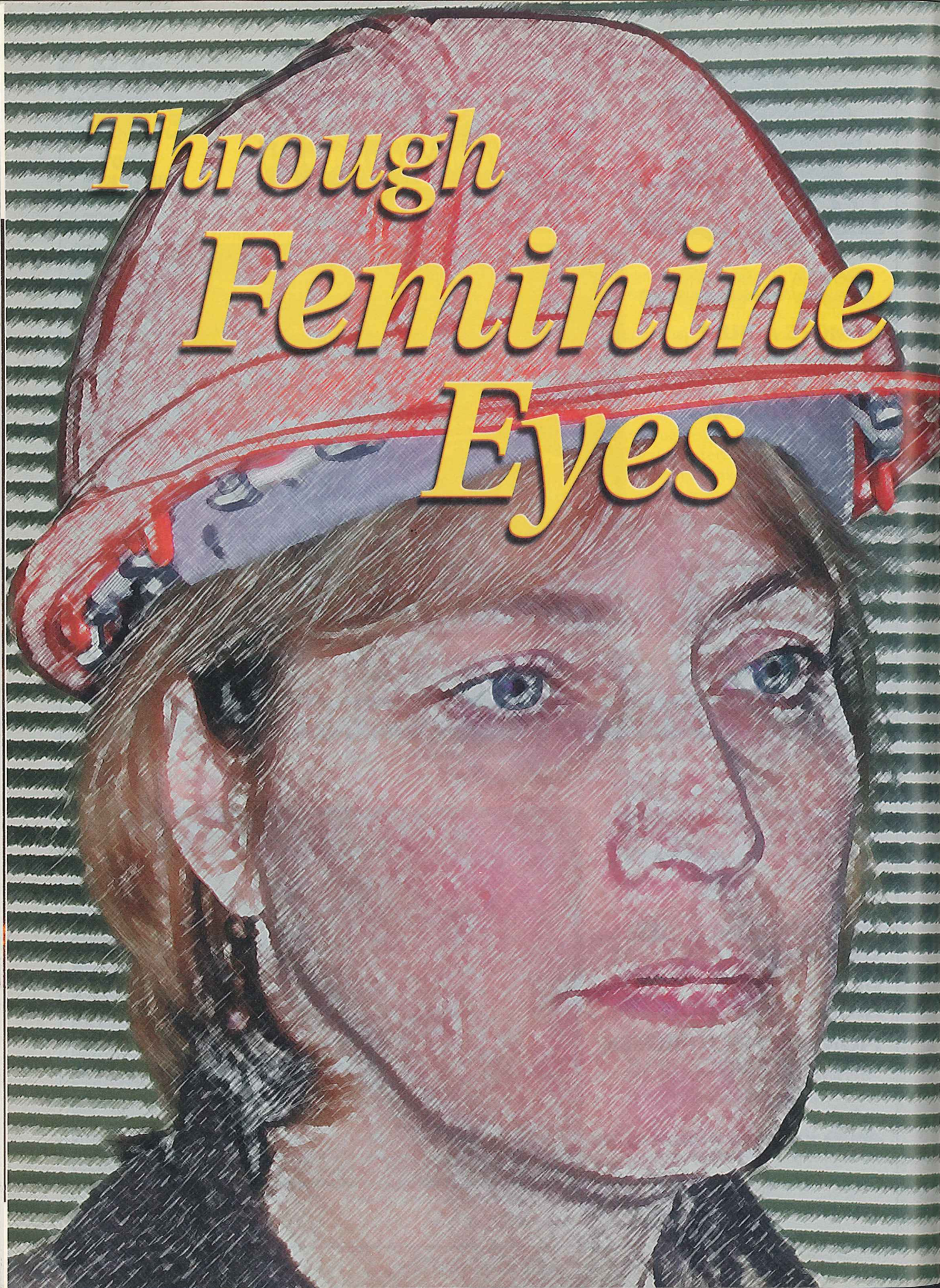


# *Through Feminine Eyes*





BY TONIA JURBIN

When Democratic presidential nominee Walter Mondale picked Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate in 1984, the debate of women in nontraditional roles changed. For the first time, the nation was forced to ask itself if a woman could handle a role historically reserved for men: that of commander in chief and president.

women to find mentors early in their careers—something many say is crucial. In most cases these mentors would ideally be someone to whom they did not report. The difficulty of course is that if they seek out women mentors, their supervisors may be the only choice.

Moreen Miller, regional manager of resource development for Lafarge (eastern) Canada, set out ground rules with three females she mentors, who

when she starts a family. She is uncertain how that will be received at work.

Things have changed in the last 20 years. Generally, most men accept and even embrace the uniqueness of women, recognize the challenges they face and appreciate their different style. Let's face it, anyone who had a maternity leave 10 years ago was an anomaly, and many employers probably didn't even know how to complete the paperwork.

## Women are Advancing in this Male-Dominated Industry, but Some Hurdles Remain

That question was skirted when Mondale lost the election to Ronald Reagan. But many women both before and after Ferraro have proven they had what it took to excel in traditionally male roles. And although it has received much less notoriety than national politics, the aggregate industry has wrestled with the role of women in traditionally male occupations.

Like those in the public eye, women in the aggregate industry have excelled. But their struggle is far from over.

Many of the women in the aggregate industry agree that once they have demonstrated competence, the opening bid to sitting at the table, most of their peers readily accept them.

### Strength in Numbers

Although women make up a small percentage of the aggregate industry work force, their numbers have been steadily rising for the past several decades (see Table 1 on page 38). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women made up about 4% of the work force in both sand and gravel and crushed stone operations in 1970. Ten years later that percentage doubled. In 1990, the number of women jumped to 10% and in 2000 it crept up to 11%.

The number of women has nearly tripled from 3,400 in 1970 to 9,100 in 2000. Meanwhile, overall employment in the industry has grown 6%. In 1970, the industry employed 77,500 and 82,100 in 2000.

But in spite of those growing numbers, it is sometimes difficult for

she also supervises. "Once were outside of work, it's friends," Miller says. She says it is every professional's responsibility to guide young people early in their careers.

"We have to encourage women and show them that nontraditional roles can be very fulfilling," Miller says. "We have to banish the myth of the glass ceiling. It exists in some places, but we have to stop naval gazing; it's very debilitating."

Janet Bherer, production superintendent of three pits in Ontario, Canada for Dufferin Aggregates, unconditionally attributes her success to good mentors and good luck.

"The three elements to my success were support, confidence and balance," Bherer says. "It was through the support of my family and a good mentor that I gained enough confidence to be more assertive with my career path. It was a big adjustment for my supervisor to deal with people who weren't use to dealing with women."

"There was a big adjustment for me entering the workplace because there were no (male or female) role models, many unknowns and I didn't have my friends around me anymore," Bherer recalls. "It took about four years for my colleagues to respect me. It wasn't until I moved closer to my quarries and found a couple of extra hours a day, that I realized I hadn't been doing anything for me."

Bherer has found a good balance between work, family and pastime. She admits, however, that balance will change

Today in Canada, women have the option of extending their maternity leave from six months to a year. It's a tough call to be out of sight and mind for a year, but how many working mothers wouldn't want to take that time off? Teresa Malpage, also with Dufferin Aggregates in Ontario, is on her second maternity leave. She hasn't decided when she will return to work, but she is obviously valued. When she left she was the quality assurance manager. Her earlier work as an inspector gave her great interest and a solid background in quality control.

Recently she was instrumental in developing a marketable product by blending some of the high quantities of mine waste. When she returns, a new title, product development manager will have been created for her. "I am very assertive and clear in what I need to accomplish my job," Malpage says.

"Obviously being a female entering a male-dominated industry has its challenges," Malpage says. "I'm only about 5 ft 2 in. When I was an inspector, men tended to stereotype me as not being physically capable of doing my job. At other times, the issues on site were as much culturally based as gender based. As the inspector, it was not difficult for me to assert myself."

### Adjusting Cultures

As the number of women in the work force increase, many companies have slowly adjusted to accommodate these new recruits and, more importantly, to retain the older ones.





Here are some of the women who drive for Graniterock. Ricki Mancebo is seated on the fender of the truck on the right.

"The more women you have in the work force, the easier it becomes to offer things like alternative schedule policies, telecommuting, part-time work and even purchasing an extra week off a year," says Tammy Cummings. Cummings is vice president of human resources and organizational development for Richmond, Va.-based Luck Stone Corp. "That is very popular with our female employees.

"I think the biggest barrier to women in the aggregate industry is education," Cummings says. She has seen a dramatic increase of women summer hires since the numbers have increased in the mining engineering programs.

"During the last three summers, about 15% of our hires were women," Cummings says. "Typically the engineering students will work in the quarries doing the same job as a foreman trainee might. However, we expose the students to a number of possible career paths and different opportunities early on in their education. For example, they may work in IT, resource planning or marketing. Not everyone wants to work in a quarry." Cummings adds that once women enter the industry they don't face as many obstacles.

Rena Caldwell, shop foreman for Rogers Group, in Gordonsville, Tenn., started as a laborer 14 years ago. A big strong farm girl, Caldwell had always enjoyed tinkering, working outside and isn't shy to say she was attracted to the industry by money.

"I just told them in the job interview that I would do anything, anything at all," Caldwell says. "I'm not afraid to step up and do something new, or to at least try it."

Rogers Group recognized what it had in Caldwell and whether it's been human resources, business management or technical, she has never been refused training that she has requested. She can repair anything in a crushing plant, drive any vehicle and operate most heavy equipment. She is a certified scale operator, a quality control technician and a supervisor at the fabrication plant for the southern region.

"This region has a lot of small towns with a lot of old-fashioned attitudes," Caldwell says. "The women aren't shut out, they just aren't attracted to the work. It's dusty, noisy, colder here than anywhere else in the winter and hotter here than anywhere else in the summer. I try not to let people

place barriers in front of me; I haven't really found any barrier that have stopped me because I never say no.

"Being single, it's easy for me to focus on my career. New people will tend to ignore me if I'm standing beside my supervisor. And women vendors who used to come out here in mini-skirts and make-up didn't want to talk to me either. I don't feel any resentment, but the guys are always testing me. It's more good-natured ribbing than anything because when my supervisor is not around, I'm in charge—I can hire, fire and discipline."

### No Excuses

Sam Lien is the vice president of corporate development and CIO of Pete Lien & Sons in South Dakota and the mother of three. She doesn't mince words when discussing women in the work place.

"The barriers change as I get older, but the barriers are all in my own mind—those I create for myself," Lien says. "Many women in nontraditional roles feel like they cannot be feminine. I am a very nurturing, almost mothering type of person. I used to fight it, but now I don't. To break through the glass



provided her many learning opportunities. But as women climb the ladder, leadership training can be lacking.

"As an industry, we have been more task- and work-product orientated and have not developed leadership skills," Henry says. Henry serves on the board of trustees of Raleigh's Peace College, which offers a leadership studies program.

"We have a recent (woman) grad from the program in our IT department and she has clearly demonstrated her new skills," Henry says. "To become better leaders, we have to take whatever leadership opportunities are afforded to us. Women can volunteer for special task forces, join a board of directors and look for opportunities in management training programs."

To retain its new recruits, Martin Marietta developed a program that focuses on the strengths of its new employees as individuals.

"We set them up to succeed, which goes back to the importance of finding a supportive mentor," Henry says. "We also show them the many opportunities open to them in the aggregate industry. We encourage them to learn the business, the process and to network. Many of the women in our senior management ranks are mothers, so we have set the tone at the top."

Luck Stone's Cummings says women, by nature, have a lot of what it takes to be a good leader. "To be a good leader you have to be visionary, trusting and confident—but you also have to be able to articulate that vision," she says. "Women are good at that. You have to be sincere and empathetic towards coworkers. Women are good at that too. You also have to be extremely

competent to gain the respect of your peers."

Cummings says that given the opportunities, women quickly gain confidence and tend to seek out and thrive on feedback, a leadership trait that many men don't share.

But the women in the trenches see retaining women as a far bigger issue than recruiting them. Ask an Engineer-In-Training that has not yet found her feet about the barriers and challenges she is facing, and a different view of the world emerges.

A woman asking not to be identified moved to Western Canada for a job. "I feel like there is no direction to my training and that I have been thrown to the wolves," she says.

The woman is one of the first EIT's being groomed for a position that would traditionally have been filled by someone within the ranks and therefore has no role models irrespective of gender.

"I just feel isolated and confused as we go through another re-organization and I have even less understanding of my role," the EIT says. "It's hard starting out when you don't have the experience to know what the choices are, never mind making the

right ones. I really need a mentor—someone who is not my supervisor and has shared some of my experiences—to guide me through this industry."

She says that she and several of her women engineer friends have had serious second thoughts about their career choices.

*"I feel like there is no direction to my training and that I have been thrown to the wolves"—female EIT*

Table 1

### Women Employed in Aggregates

	Total employees	Women
<b>1970</b>		
S&G	36,700	1,500
CS	40,800	1,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>77,500</b>	<b>3,400</b>
<b>1980</b>		
S&G	36,100	3,100
CS	39,700	2,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,800</b>	<b>5,800</b>
<b>1990</b>		
S&G	33,900	3,500
CS	40,700	3,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>74,600</b>	<b>7,200</b>
<b>2000</b>		
S&G	37,400	4,700
CS	44,700	4,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,100</b>	<b>9,100</b>

S&G: sand and gravel operations  
CS: crushed and broken stone operations

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Research from The Netherlands shows that when efforts to recruit women into nontraditional roles are relaxed, there is simply not enough momentum to maintain an interest and the number of women drops. The aggregate industry is a long ways off from the critical mass of about 30% that is considered necessary to make lasting changes. Although their ranks have grown to more than 10% of the U.S. work force, there may never be 30% of women in these jobs—just as men will probably never make up 30% of the nurses.

As women continue to enter and move up the ranks of the aggregate industry, the number of role models and mentors to guide new recruits increases. But without company-wide support, the path women traverse could be a rugged one.

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