

IN CONTEXT

ROBIN HAMMOND

IN THE WINTER OF 1979 stereotypes of Mormon women were being given an inordinate amount of media attention because of Sonia Johnson's excommunication and the Church's opposition to ERA. It was depressing enough to grow up with Patty Perfect, that ever-cheerful, well-organized, bread-baking embodiment of Mormon Sisterhood. She and I were old adversaries. Now she was being joined by Patty Programmed, the oppressed non-thinking ultra-orthodox tool of sexist church leaders. It was too much. I felt a fierce desire to show the world Mormon women as I know them: liberal, conservative, eccentric, conforming, irreverent, pious, domineering, submissive, confident, fearful, happy, depressed: sometimes all of the above in one person. Our differences may be masked by our shared convictions, but they certainly exist. Beneath our Mormon facades we differ and agree in a multitude of ways.

So I took my camera and tape recorder and stalked friends, relatives and sisters. To establish each woman's context, I photographed her doing something she loved in a setting where she felt most herself. This helped her to be relaxed and natural in front of the camera. It also pictorially linked her with the activity she loves most. Each sister was interviewed with a series of questions designed to elicit her feelings about herself. The resulting quotes were not intended to explain the pictures, but to complement them; to give more depth to the context.

"In Context" is a work in progress, unfinished. Like a mosaic, each woman's individual truth links with that of her sisters. The One True Mormon Woman exists, but not as one. She is many, and she is unique.



Betsy Blaylock



Kristine Kuehl

I wouldn't want to fix cars for a living, but you never know. I've never liked to sit behind desks or in an office. It drives me crazy. I like being outside.

Betsy Blaylock

I hate that word "housewife." I'm not married to the house. I'm married to my husband. My main responsibility is not to the house, it's to my family. I'm not tied to the house at all.

Kristine Kuehl

Working with children is what I do better than anything. My classroom was a place where I was never ever lonely. The children would all walk in and hug my legs and I'd pat their heads. It was the best place in the world to be.

Bonnie Brackett



Bonnie Brackett



Hilda Hills

A hard passage in my life was when I lost a child. I felt to blame, she was so beautiful. Actually, I don't think she ever came to us. She just looked into heaven and smiled. When she died, that made me know that I had to start thinking for myself. I began to make decisions. It was a hard way to learn.

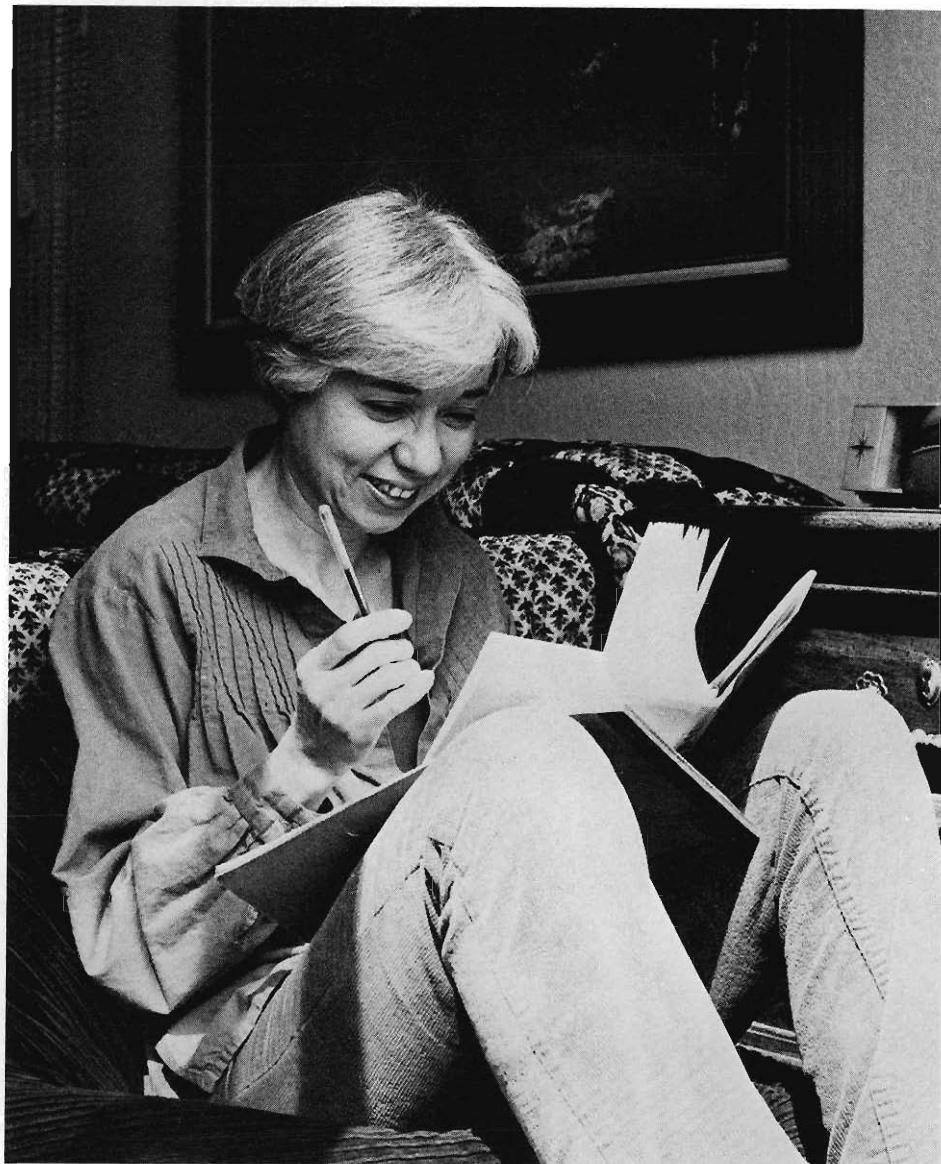
Clara McIlwain

I was twenty-one the first year that women could vote. In fact, I worked for the vote. I was a suffragist. I was not a Suffragette. That type of women were a little rough. I don't like the modern organization either. But I've always had a cause to work for. I worked for the Red Cross in 1914 and I was a Farmerette. Now that I'm older I don't mind being home.

Hilda Hills



Clara McIlwain



Carol Lynn Pearson

I would most like to be remembered as somebody who helped to heal this broken home of ours and invited our Mother in Heaven back. I think that on all levels we must get our Mother back. If I could, that's what I'd do.

Carol Lynn Pearson

I'm so definite about some things. Like my funeral. It's been planned forever. It's going to be all women, no men, except to officiate. I admire men, and I think they're great, but I want women speaking at my funeral.

LeOra Zundel

My parents hoped that I would become an operatic diva. They encouraged me to the fullest and sacrificed to promote me and pay for lessons. I worked, and all my money went for voice lessons. My voice teachers gave me two lessons for the price of one because I showed so much promise. What happened to this dream? Well, I got married. That's what happened to it.

Myra Myszka



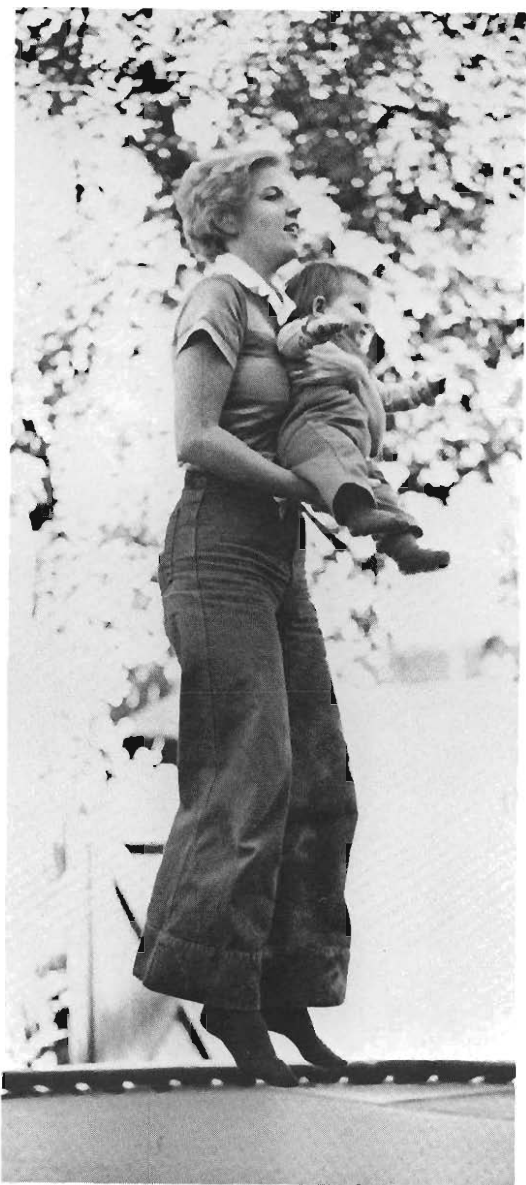
LeOra Zundel



Myra Myszka



Marti Lythgoe



Gail Baugh

*Ideas renew me. It renews me to be around people with exciting ideas, new ideas—
or to read exciting ideas.*

Marti Lythgoe

*I don't need something outside my home to show me I'm worthwhile. Having a
career isn't important enough to give up my freedom. Being at home is how I feel
free.*

Gail Baugh

*I was the meanest little girl you ever saw in your life. My father taught me how to
box, and I was the toughest little girl in the town of Rio Vista. There was no boy
even a head taller than me that I couldn't deck with one blow.*

Pat Kling



Pat Kling



Renee Tietjen

I remember as a child, going out and playing in the sand and constructing elaborate little cities. I remember digging up marigolds and planting them in special places so they would be trees. After I had chosen to be a landscape architect it suddenly dawned on me that I had done this as a child, and I had enjoyed it then.

Renee Tietjen

While I was at BYU I took one semester at Salzburg. At the end of the semester I toured England alone, which had been my dream, with my British railway pass. I came home thinking, "I can do anything! I have seen the other side of the world!" After that I stopped being so self-conscious about what I looked like or what I could do or couldn't do. I felt so much more self-confidence.

Valerie Clark

Putting ourselves into another time and place, imagining how we would dress, can be a transcendental experience. When I discovered the German romantic writers as an undergraduate, I felt like I'd come home because they capture that feeling of home-sickness so well.

Sandy Straubhaar



Valerie Clark



Sandy Straubhaar



Alison Morera



Judy Willis



Beth Francis Titensor



Laura Webber Decker

During World War II I worked at Mare Island in the optical shop mostly on bore sights. The guns were set by these bore sights, so accuracy was a life and death matter. After the war I worked at Benicia Arsenal for several years. I felt terrible when I couldn't work anymore. I just adored working.

Laura Webber Decker

Having a baby gave me a feeling of confidence and self-worth. It's an amazing thing to know your body can do that. It sounds crazy, but it made me feel, "Wow! It really worked! I can do that!"

Alison Morera

From the time I was a child I was taught to believe in natural healing and in working with nature instead of against it.

Beth Francis Titensor

I like to paint. I like to sew and do needlework. I like to bake. I teach wheat and gluten classes. I like to do flower arrangements. I love to work with wood—just anything where I can use my hands.

Judy Willis



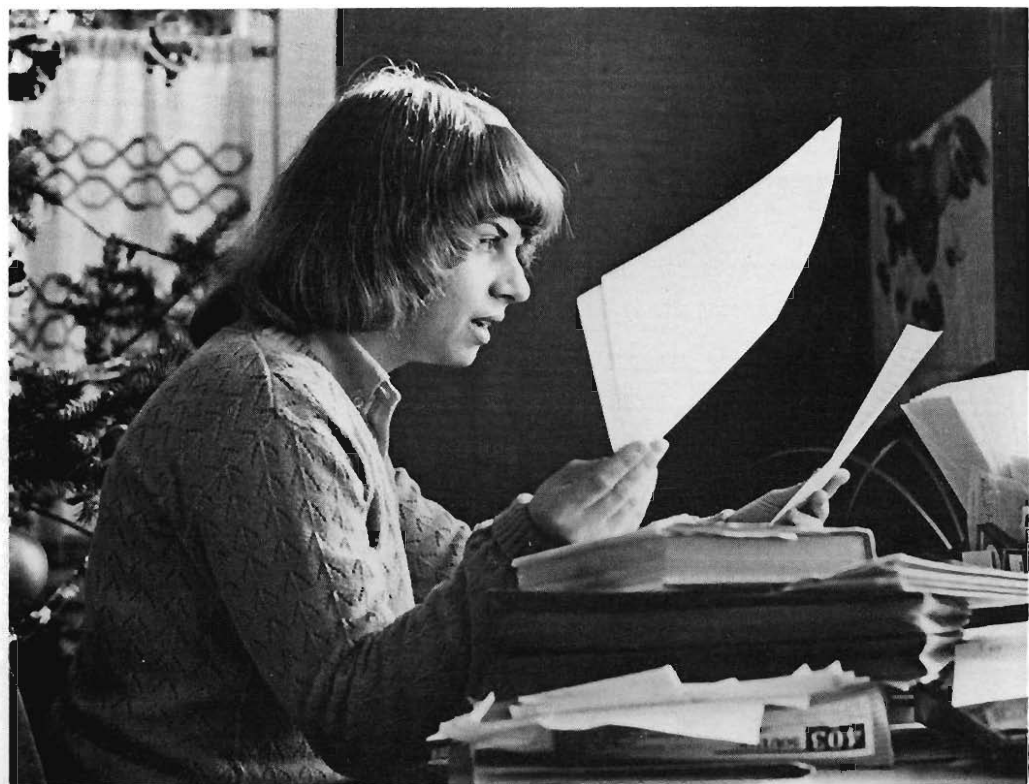
At one point I was in a state of depression that I could not shake. Every day I thought of suicide. I just wanted to die because I could not understand what was wrong with me. Finally I prayed for a whole day and the answer came. It came so strong I knew I had Heavenly Father behind me. It gave me strength to stand up to the world and say: "I can do anything!"

Caroline "Carrie" ZitzEvancih



I'd always liked art galleries, but I never knew what I was looking at. One day in Boston I went to the gallery and heard my first docent explaining a Madonna. All of a sudden this painting just came to life. It was like turning on a light. I felt it was opening a whole new world.

Ruth Ellsworth Knudson



What I would like to do is somehow take the world that I know and put it on paper. I don't think that the Mormon world really survives on paper yet. I used to be just paralyzed by worrying about offending anybody—my best friend, my mother, my husband, my bishop—afraid that someone might be offended or think that Mormons are anything less than absolutely wonderful. I don't have that fear anymore. I just want to write.

Linda Sillitoe

There is strength in the differences between men and women. When they work together, the decisions that emerge are better than the decisions they reach independently. Women and men tend to draw different conclusions from the same data, but when the conclusions are synthesized the resulting decisions are fantastic.

Diane McKinney Kellogg

I've always been interested in politics. It's a very natural thing for me. I think it's important to be a contributing member of society. If you don't want the real crazies to take over, you have to be involved.

Judy Ushio

