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Nor does Cuniberti, who quipped: "Political reporters don't jump into the shower with Ronald Reagan."

Women sportswriters are upset that their search for equality has been lost in the hoopla over admission to the locker room. They say the real issue at stake is whether men and women can respect each other as professionals.

"The only thing that bothers me about women sportswriters is when they're dumb or don't know what they're doing," said Murray Chass, chairman of the New York Chapter of Baseball Writers of America. "But I feel exactly the same way about male sportswriters."

What prevents many of the die-hard male sportswriters from respecting even the most knowledgeable of women? Lawrie Mifflin, who covers the New York Cosmos and Rangers, said the presence of women in the locker room forced men to realize that they are strangers, too. "They're forced to see that they're really much closer to any reporter . . . than they are to the players, because they and the women are both in the same business" she said. "It almost drives them crazy."

Scandal and innovation, however, have given way to acceptance and custom in recent months. For the most part, women are winning the battle for admission to locker rooms, but they must still conquer the war of attitudes.

"Getting into the locker room seems like such a foolish thing to waste your energies on," said Robin Herman, who covered the New York Rangers. "Sixty percent of my time and effort used to be spent on just trying to get to the players, instead of on what I was writing."

Angell agreed. He wrote: "In time, it may be hoped, newspaper readers will diminish their demand that athletes be transformed into mere celebrities; when that happens, we can close the clubhouse altogether and give our attention to watching the players . . . at their splendid best . . . on the field."

And, in time, women hope that men will join them in seeing this as a writer's issue — not a women's issue. ☐

Sharon Ann Kester, is a staff writer for the Daily Tar Heel.

Mary Garber:

Fight began early for this female journalist

By SHARON ANN KESTER

"Miami's troubles started when a Hayes' punt was dropped on the North Carolina 3-yard line by the Tar Heels' Sammy Johnson.

"In three downs the Redskins got no yardage, but on fourth down, Steve Bumpass went deep into his end zone to punt. The Tar Heel defense, led by Walter Black . . . put pressure on Bumpass. Bumpass couldn't get the kick off . . ." (excerpt from the Winston-Salem Journal, 9-22-81)

And that's not all she wrote. She is Mary Garber, and, in fact, she has been writing about Atlantic Coast Conference football, basketball, tennis and track since 1944.

The 66-year-old dean of female sportswriters, as she has been called, has tired of the battle over admission to the locker rooms. Having developed alternatives and, what she considers, preferable stratagems to the locker room restrictions, she talked about her entry into the profession, which more closely resembled a war than a battle.

She began writing sports articles during World War II — a time when manpower shortages necessitated the use of women in just about every traditionally male-dominated field.

But when the war was over, Garber returned to covering news. Little by little, she regained her sports beat, progressing from the coverage of high schools to the college sports scene.

"The problem then was that I wasn't even admitted to the press box," Garber said. "I recall seeing a 10-year-old boy hopping up and down the aisles of the press box, while I suffered in an auxiliary box with sportswriters' wives who talked about anything but sports.

"Now it seems everyone wants to take credit for getting me into the press box," she said. But the credit is due one man — Leon Dure, former managing editor of the Winston-Salem Journal. "He spoke to the presidents of universities, who in turn, rapped the sports information directors on the head," Garber said. "It seems he [Dure] said something about letting a monkey in the box to cover a game if that is who he wanted to do it."

Garber then turned her attention to the Atlantic Coast Sportswriters Association, which denied her entry. "That upset me even more than the press box issue," she said. Garber was told that membership in this group was a fringe benefit and that the group could decide who its members would and would not be.

When a new director of the group unwittingly accepted the dues paid for by the Winston-Salem Journal, he was in a quandary. "There was nothing he could do but admit me," Garber said.

"And, in time, I'm sure everyone will ask what the big excitement was over the dressing room," predicted Garber, who went on to serve as President of the sportswriters' group for three years and presently, serves as football director. ☐

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Mary Garber
Sportswriter



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