

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF KONNAROCK TRAINING SCHOOL ORAL HISTORIES:
FEMINIST THEOLOGY¹ AT WORK

“We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains.” Ursula K. LeGuin

I have examined the stories of my narrators and the additional data I gathered looking for the resistance, the subversion, the ways women lived their stories in a time when their voices were often silenced, and by doing so, they have made it possible for me to stand on their shoulders and tell my own story. The story of KTS was indeed a letter sent to me by my mother and all the other “KTS girls.” The women who supported and who staffed KTS unknowingly embraced feminist principles, even though they may not have in the past or may not now name them as such. These women experienced a tension between the traditional society in which they lived and what they envisioned as a society where women, and indeed where all people, flourished. They worked toward that vision while at KTS and nurtured students who also have continued to lead lives dedicated to making a better world. The feminist emphasis on community is an important part of the KTS experience, and the several communities affected by the school flourished under the influence of leadership of women. The KTS community itself provided a safe haven to nourish growth and develop skills that would support the women spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and financially as they left the school for a place in the wider world.

The concept of feminist theology is important in this discussion of Konnarock Training School because such theology “offers and enables a conversion experience of mind, heart, and way of living and judging” (Finson, 1995). Yet I realize in viewing the mission of KTS through the lens of time and my own conceptions of feminism and theology, I am risking an analysis that may be far from the intentions of those involved in the experience. I am bringing my biases to this analysis, but it is my belief that the conclusions I have reached are reasonable. I hope to show this in this chapter. It is true the women themselves probably never spoke of feminism or of feminist theology as such,

¹ Appendix I contains an overview of the history and principles of feminist theology.

but the seeds of those ideas germinated in gardens planted by the women who came before us. That KTS was one of those many gardens is the argument I wish to make.

The Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America

Before I turn to Konnarock Training School's work specifically, it seems appropriate that I briefly discuss the larger organization that founded and supported the mountain work. In a discussion of feminism during the sixty years following the Civil War, Estelle Freedman (1995) says it was a period of intense institution building by women. "One of the largest manifestations of 'social feminism' in the late nineteenth century—the woman's club movement"—was the result of women being denied access to many male institutions and the recognition that women needed to be a part of support networks of other women (Freedman, 1995. p. 90). While many of the clubs were originally formed as social organizations, these soon began to see ways they might work for reform (Freedman, 1995). Women's organizations within churches, often called women's missionary societies, also began to develop, first on local levels, and then spreading to state and national women's societies. In 1908, the national Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America was formed from three smaller groups of women and undertook a variety of tasks to improve women's place in the world and to spread the message of Christ.

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) soon began publication of a national magazine, *Lutheran Woman's Work* (LWW); it is from this work that I acquired much information about the organization and about KTS. As I spent many hours looking through these magazines for references to KTS, I also read articles about the group's other work. The Society was a product of its times in both positive and negative ways. Within the magazine I saw examples of colonialism, naiveté about the United States, sexism, and Christian chauvinism. Yet for every one of these examples, I found other more hopeful words and images. I am bringing my own twenty-first century attitudes to my appraisal of the magazine, but oppositions were obvious to me. It was not only the "God language" that I found troubling at times, but references to the "conversion" of the Jews and to "coloreds" in the United States--even to the inclusion of a poem in which the

speaker said in effect that he would not call “them” black because black was associated with evil. Pictures were sometimes equally disturbing. On the October 1931 cover there was a picture of a Black child from one of the Society’s missions. The caption read, “A Little Sister in the Virgin Islands.” This seems positive enough, but present sensibilities cannot overlook the fact that the child is clutching a White doll. There were other pictures in other issues of African, Indian, and Asian children with their White baby dolls. On the other hand, within the same October 1931 issue mentioned above, there was a story about two Black women from the Virgin Islands who had been recently consecrated as deaconesses within the Lutheran Church, their training in the United States at one of the motherhouses paid for by the WMS. These women were undertaking new positions of authority and responsibility in their native land, side by side with the White mission workers. Another issue in 1930 pictured two beautiful toddlers on the cover with the caption “Friends” underneath. One child was Black, the other White. The May 1931 cover featured a drawing of several women, two Asians, an Indian, a Black, a Hispanic, and a White. The women are looking at a copy of *Lutheran Woman’s Work*, and the drawing is entitled “Of One Blood.”

As I pored over thirty-seven years of magazines, I was truly amazed at the scope of the work done by the women of the Missionary Society. The list of missions established and supported by the women included not only KTS, but also Rocky Boy mission for Native American children, missions to children in inner cities, and world missions in Haiti, Cuba, Argentina, Japan, China, India, the West Indies, and the Virgin Islands. The October 1928 issue of *LWW* reported 2000 girls enrolled in the mission schools in India. Not only did the WMS provide education for children, it helped women to become more financially secure. For instance, for many years the Society supported the development of an Indian lace industry, owned and operated by and profiting the women themselves. Hospitals were also built throughout the world, many of which were staffed with women doctors. The breadth of concerns dealt with in the magazine from 1922-1959 was staggering. I discovered stories on topics that are in some cases just as relevant today. Among these were articles about Indian suttee; oppression of Moslem women, including the veiling of women in many countries; Japanese relocation during

WWII; literacy at home and abroad; the plight of migrant workers; equal educational opportunities for women and minorities; segregation; and voting rights. In spite of the shortcomings I might identify within their work, I also believe these women recognized that “sharing privilege, sharing literacy, sharing information—which in our world is power—is one way for feminist relationships in postcolonial conditions of inequality to bridge the gaps between women” (Behar & Gordon, 1995). The WMS’s work, as witnessed through the pages of its official magazine, was not ideal; however, it represented movement toward a more just and equitable world, a doing of evolving feminist theology. This practice of theology was also evidenced in Konnarock Training School, an outgrowth of the Women’s Missionary Society.

Why Did They Come?



**FIGURE 21: KONNAROCK TRAINING SCHOOL FACULTY 1934-1935
FRONT ROW: SADIE PONWITH, GRACE BEAM, HELEN DYER, KATRINA
UMBERGER, IVORY BLEVINS ; BACK ROW: IDA TWEDTEN, MARY
BROWN CASSEL, ALICE BAUMGARDNER**

For some reason, the faded black and white photographs have drawn me back so many times that I don’t need to read the names in the captions; I have come to recognize the women. In one photo, eight women in a posed shot look out at me across the years. I

suspect the photo was taken in early fall. Although the trees in the background are in full leaf, and the grass is tall enough to partially hide the women's shoes, their coats and sweaters indicate cool weather. In a more relaxed snapshot, some of the same women gathered on the back step of KTS have been captured forever young, laughing, their attention not directed toward the photographer. I study their images for something remarkable, noteworthy about them. I want to know them; to hear their lost stories. They seem ordinary; they could be any group of teachers in the 1930s. Their faces, their smiles reveal so little to me. I look deeply into their eyes and wonder what these women were like who came to the mountains to teach.



FIGURE 22: INFORMAL SHOT OF KTS FACULTY, 1930s

(Private files of LaVerne Kiser)

Wouldn't these women have yearned to escape the isolation and repression often associated with the mountains? Or were they escaping other fates? Why would they leave their homes, sometimes nearby, sometimes hundreds of miles away, to become part of Konnarock? Although jobs for women were not plentiful and the school provided room and board in addition to salary, they certainly didn't take the jobs for money. In 1932, the salary was approximately \$65.00 a month, a little better than the average public school teacher's pay, but for much more demanding work. Even though they were not

scheduled for duties around the clock, faculty members lived at the school and were essentially on call at any time. Teachers were paid for twelve months and received time off one month in the summer and one weekend a month during the school year. Duties included such responsibilities as the supervision of a two-hour study hall one night a week, nightly devotional meetings, and morning chapel. Teachers also helped preserve food, taught summer Bible schools, and did community work; they did whatever needed to be done in any capacity in which they might serve.

But we did not have much time to ourselves. We were expected to be in the dining room, each of us as the head of a table for the three meals. The only time that was ours for ourselves was after study hall—well, during study hall except for the person who was in charge of that and then all of us usually stayed up a little later than the girls were allowed to, but we couldn't do any all nighters. (Emily Umbarger)

Perhaps it was the desire to serve that attracted most of the faculty members to work at Konnarock Training School. Many of the women were deeply religious and wanted to pass on the love of Christ to others. Geneva Shepherd remembers the faith of one teacher in particular. *“Miss Ponwith was always such a religious person; you could just tell she was by the way she lived, you know, prayed and everything.”* One report in *Lutheran Woman's Work* indicates that the women found fertile ground to sow seeds of belief: *“...in the lives of the mountain folk there is a deep spirituality which seems to emanate from the very soil—something about the hills which calls to God”* (*“Our Mountain Work,”* 1926, p.272).

Certainly, there must have been an adventurous streak in some of the women who traveled to the mountains of Virginia. For the first time, many would be on their own, away from families and communities in which they had grown up. Some like Chicago native Lilliana Bartolomei came to Konnarock in preparation for further mission work in other parts of the world. Another teacher, Helen Huston, who was in her early twenties at the time, drove by herself from Indiana to the mountains of Virginia, a place she had never been before, at a time when many women did not even drive cars.

I remember Miss Huston; she was a young teacher. She rode, drove from Indiana and you know, in those days people stacked their hay. And she was raised on a farm, but they had balers and stuff like that in those days. But she was riding along, and she thought they were teepees, Indian wigwams. And I've often thought what she thought about that crooked road, from Chilhowie. That's the way she came. Over Iron Mountain to Konnarock, and she was from Indiana. Lord! And I've always thought her mommy must have put a lot of faith in some Lord, to get her there. (LaVerne Kiser)

In the Virginia Synod Archives, I found a folder containing an amazing array of letters of application for positions at KTS during the 1930s. The list of addresses of applicants is a lesson in American geography: Genoa, Nebraska; Tippacano, Tiffin, Shelby, and Leipsic, Ohio; Creelsboro and Pinson Fork, Kentucky; Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Mondovi, and St. Paul, Wisconsin; Perkasio, Philadelphia, Latrobe, Leechburg, Eaton, Greenville, Millsville, and Mansfield, Pennsylvania; White Plains, Georgia; Waterton, Massachusetts; Maryville, Tennessee; Columbia, South Carolina; Bowen, Illinois; and too many places in Virginia and North Carolina to list. The school definitely was attractive to women throughout the United States during the 1930s.

But there were teachers that came from Minnesota, for instance, Miss Twedten had been the nurse for many years, and she was from Crookston, Minnesota. And then her friend Miss Ponwith came as a teacher. But they had a friend Miss Hilda Johnson who came for Bible school. But that probably is the farthest place out, but there were people who used that as a form of service, and they could go and see another different life for a little while and not have to live with some of the problems all of the time and so forth. And in fact there were teachers who helped with [Bible School]. I'm sure Miss Katrina went out and visited various communities—and she was on staff for a long time and especially good with the little folks when they had the community first and second graders. But the teachers through the years have come from many places. Several of mine came from Pennsylvania; several were local. Local being Marion, perhaps, or Helton—

Rose, for instance. One of our home ec. teachers was from Chilhowie. So they didn't all come from a distance, but there were enough, and the ones that did come from a distance were the ones that were firmly rooted in the church and participated in their home church and saw this as an interesting experience, different from what they were having in public schools. (Emily Umbarger)

Whatever their reasons for undertaking the responsibilities of teaching at Konnarock Training School, many of these remarkable women brought possibilities to the mountains that their students could not have dreamed of before. Although they may never have thought of themselves as actively challenging traditional gender roles, although they may never have identified themselves as feminists, and although the term feminist transformational theology was not in use until after the school closed its doors, when I hear and read about the work of the women at KTS, I see them as pioneers who lived by feminist Christian principles. They were able to face the conditions of the time in which they lived, to find a way to challenge those conditions, and to turn “women’s work” into a fulfilling, far-reaching mission.

And at that time, remember now, in '48 and '49 and '50, what a bold thing that was to do [to leave your home and come so far to teach]. And I guess the majority of our teachers came from out of the area. The lady that keeps sticking in my mind, she was a really attractive, a pretty woman, that had the migraines, she was from far away. Sarah Miller was from Philadelphia. And to come down here to the mountains and spend the time with us, to be that independent in that day was a different thing. And I think probably unconsciously it had to affect us girls. That they could come that distance and stay, and be on their own. I think it fostered independence in me, just the example in being there. (Betty Reedy)

Konnarock Training School focused on a traditional education for women, on training them to be mothers, wives, teachers, and nurses. This school was established in an area where children, especially females, were badly in need of the most basic of educational training. It is difficult even to imagine a better life when one is trapped in

illiteracy and poverty. There was a significant need for skills in homemaking and care giving as well as general education to be imparted. The work of women in their homes and the contributions they have made to the well being of the family and of society have frequently been undervalued in a patriarchal society (Haney, 1994). An important step in consciousness-raising for women is to reach the understanding that their labor is important, to come to a new perception of self that will enable them to work toward fulfillment (Collins, 1974). Elshtain (1995) argues that the goal of feminism is not for women to enter man's competitive culture, but to preserve women's tradition of care and to oppose a culture in which traditional feminist values are not respected.

Konnarock Training School helped its students to learn to value themselves and the skills they acquired; it gave them pride in the work of maintaining family and building community.

But when you think of the words Konnarock Training School, well, what is it training to be? To be a good citizen, to be a trained person that could give extra services, and we were to take what abilities we had to go back home and help our families. To be trained as a mother taking care of the home and just to have pride in yourself, that you were a worthwhile person. That you could learn to do and pass that on to your children. You know, what is right and what is wrong. We were a fortunate group to have the opportunity to go to school at Konnarock.
(Rose Kirby)

[We were taught] how to take care of a home and family and make a home and family with the center being religious belief. But it was not an indoctrination type thing. It was just the way you do things. Do things properly—the cleaning, the laundry, whatever we did, do it well. Do it well and be dedicated to doing whatever you did well; [don't] slide by. [Betty Reedy]

[One of the best things was] just teaching [us] things to do and how to do things. Parents didn't have the time or didn't teach just the basic things of housekeeping and knowing how to manage things. I guess [the teachers] figured most of us

would get married, so they prepared us for things that we'd need to know when we married. They trained you in household things that you would need to know. I mean that it was important, and to take your kids [to church], and to teach them things, and just the way we did things. It was a big difference to me just to know how better to cook and clean house and little things like that, to keep things clean.
(Geneva Shepherd)

At the same time KTS was encouraging women to nurture families, it gave women choices they would not have had otherwise. Simply having a better education opened pathways for them. “Women striving daily to make plain the good and bad in their lives also contribute to a larger change, the breakdown of fictions that divide us from each other....Women who refuse to act out lies at home can turn the same honest scrutiny outside, demanding truth in their work, their education, their politics” (Hochman, 1994, p. 6). KTS’s training, both through direct instruction and through example, enabled students to reject the position of women as victims and to become “active agents” in their own lives (Baron, 1991, p. 11).

The teachers at the school, and the students themselves, believed in the importance of nurturing individual human beings who could carry an ethic of care from their homes into the broader community (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997). Teaching care and nurture at KTS was not done to keep students in traditional roles but to increase their understanding of the importance of all the work of women that has not been recognized as valuable. For society to fully recognize the worth of the offices of home, of care, and of nurture would not mean forcing women to forego the possibilities of being business leaders, politicians, and professionals, but it would mean that for all people in all areas of life, cooperation and community would be esteemed above the values of competition and absolute autonomy. When all work is honored, individuals are honored.

Some feminists believe the devaluation of women’s homemaking and community building skills is a result of the patriarchal structure’s perpetuation of its own power (Antrobus, 2002; Belenky et al., 1997). “The whole society is impoverished when

women are silenced and their homemaking is uncounted” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 37). Archeologists and anthropologists who have studied ancient matriarchal cultures report these societies were more communal, more peaceful, and more integrated than modern societies (Inglehart, 1983). Society is much more likely to progress if it supports the development of women’s “large hearts and powerful minds; to become powerfully voiced and careful listeners; to nurture themselves, as well as their families and communities” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 37).

I think [what made KTS unique] was a sincere desire to make a positive difference in the lives of the people that the school could touch. For the students, it was education. For the parents, perhaps it was giving them something to make them better parents, more knowledge about things that made for a good home. And of the ones I know anything about, maybe even more striking in the older ones, I’ve known a few of Mother’s girls relatively well, one or two who lived here in the community and were good friends, as well as their children, but some of them that just wouldn’t have had much of a start on life at all without some of the principles and the positive things that the school tried to instill. Of course, it didn’t take in everybody, but it was good—it was a program that I think made a difference in many lives. (Emily Umbarger)

While feminists today know many women in the world still live in oppression, they also know they must take time to bring about change, and try do so in a way that does not negate or deny everything women know and believe. There is a “twofold context of feminist ethics—vision and present community...[that] involves being a part of the envisioning and the struggling” (Haney, 1994, p. 5). Women at KTS understood the anguish and the elation involved in “doing” feminist theology.

Identifying feminist themes within the vast amount of data with which I had to work was daunting. Both as a qualitative researcher and as a feminist, I found it difficult to neatly package and separate ideas into distinct items like eggs in a carton, each excluding the other. A more suitable metaphor is that of a patchwork quilt, each piece carefully connected to the other, creating an interlocking and repeating pattern whose

beauty depends on its completeness. I offer here my analysis of feminist theology at work in pieces, hoping the threads somehow weave together to reconstruct a sense of the totality of the mission of Konnarock Training School. Overlapping themes apparent to me in the data led me to see the school as an example of feminist theology in practice. These themes are Family and Friends, Community, Identity, A Tradition of Leadership, and An Eschatological Focus.

Family and Friends

Family is an indefinite word and has both negative and positive implications within feminist theory. At least since the Renaissance, when the concept of the Great Chain of Being advanced the idea of Father God, father king, and father as head of the family, and until the 1950s and '60s, when the gold standard seemed to be the nuclear family where father knew best, family has frequently been a tool of the patriarchal system. Along with Christian theology, the idea of family has been perverted and inverted to serve the interests of those in power and to limit possibilities for the oppressed. Charges against the family as the breeding ground for all sexist oppressions, and consequently all other oppressions, were familiar in writings of second wave feminists. Even as we seek autonomy, we do not wish, nor could we achieve, freedom from all connections to others. How those connections can uphold or repress the individual concerns feminists. We are individuals having unique needs and abilities, but we are individuals in relationship. Therefore, while there is valid criticism of oppressive family relationships, one also finds within feminist scholarship the view that “women could re-frame family rather than refuse it....Perhaps...a family could be a holdout against conformity [and oppression], a place that nurtured free-thinking women and men” (Hochman, 1994). Family relationships can cultivate values that challenge the status quo, the power elite, and class structure without becoming a tool for the far right’s call for a return to traditional, patriarchal “family” values (Elshtain, 1995). I, too, believe that the family, when it is a place of care, negotiation, and encouragement, can be vital in establishing a more just world.

Repeatedly the narrators in this study portray the atmosphere at KTS as one of positive family closeness. In their work, Belenky et al. (1997) describe the women's institutions they studied as embodying

many of the goals and practices found in highly nurturing, democratic families dedicated to sponsoring the fullest development of voice and mind in each . . . member. . . [The group leaders] were like mothers who had developed the most elaborate philosophy and set of practices for bringing people unequal in terms of power, status, and abilities into relationships of full equality" (p. 11).

The school was not intended to be an orphanage, nor did it, like some Native-American mission schools, remove children from contact with their biological families. Instead, KTS gave children a second family. For Dora Testerman and a few other children, KTS was the only home they knew. Dora's coarse voice filled with gentleness when she spoke of the relationships she had with her teachers.

And Miss Katrina Umbarger. She was my mommy, Miss Katrina was. She wasn't really, but I called her that. And every night she'd give me a bedtime story, 'til I got too old I guess, and I still wanted her to [read to me]. She had to come in my room. They didn't allow me out after I got in the bed. She'd come in my room and sit on the side of the bed or in the chair and read to me and them other two girls, and that high school girl. She read "Cinderella" and "The Seven Dwarves" and The Wizard of Oz and Heidi on the Mountain. They had all kinds of children's books in the library. She'd read one, but she never did get the same one again; she'd go get a different one. But Miss Katrina, she never did punish me. Anything went down, I had to go to the principal!

Helen Dyer was the principal. I loved her. I was mischievous and she'd make me sit in her office, sit in her chair in the office. And I'd turn and look away from her; I wouldn't look at her. Every once in a while, I'd look sideways and she'd be working, typing, and grinning, because she knew I was mad. Hey, law! Yeah, she was real strict, but she was real good. She'd take a walk with two or three [girls] around on the school land. And she could play a fiddle. I'd ease and peck on her door and get her to play her fiddle. And she had this old scarf, I'd guess you'd

call it. Had a fox's head on it, you know, to wear around her neck to keep warm. I'd go in and say, "Can I wear your scarf while you play the fiddle?" Yeah, she'd put the scarf around [my neck], it's head a hanging down here, while she played the fiddle right soft. 'Cause she knew if she played it loud and the rest of them heard it, they'd come. Sometimes she'd play it in study hall, I mean, where we had our prayer of a night. We could con her into playing a religious song.

And that Miss Twedten. I loved her. She'd been over seas in the war. She talked fancy. We always said she talks fancy. And she'd tell the war tales, that you know, they couldn't have no light, had a flashlight to doctor the soldiers and things. She was real good, buddy, Ida Twedten was.

Other narrators also felt they were a part of a family at Konnarock.

I don't know how to put it into words, but you got to know the kids, each other, better, and spent more time not just in class. At a public school, all the time is in class. But we were just like a family. You spent more time together and just grew together. (Geneva Shepherd)

[The relationships] were great. It was sisters. We were considered sisters. And the teachers, you know, Mrs. Deal was our mother. And she was everybody's mother. But we were sisters. We did things together. We were buddies; we were pals; we were just close; we were very close in Christianity. We were family. So I can't get much closer than that. We were just family. It was the family atmosphere that was presented to each and every student. It was just all in all the teachers and the way they taught and how they made it a family. (Peggie Baldwin)

It was almost like one big family. When I went there the first year, some of the older girls, particularly the senior girls, looked after the younger girls and helped us to get into the swing of things. The new girls, the freshmen girls, always had an older girl working with her on the job so she'd learn how to do it. I didn't have a

sister, but to me it was sort of like a sister relationship with those people. Some you liked better than others, but lifelong friendships were developed there I do believe, even among students and the teachers. It was like a family. (Betty Reedy)

Faculty often used *family* and related words to speak about the relationships at KTS. Mary Phlegar Smith's (1925) first report to the Missionary Society about the new school at Konnarock said,

The eight resident pupils with the staff form a family where each has certain work and duties that have educational value and character-forming influence. The girls are charged nothing, but pay for their board, tuition, clothes and books by helping with the work of the house. (p. 237)

In 1928, Catherine Cox wrote about the various Christmas activities of the school. After programs including the entire community, the season was celebrated "the night and morning before [our girls] went home for their vacation,...[and] only our 'family' was present" (p. 192). During Helen Dyer's years as principal, she often referred to the staff as "teacher-mothers" and called the evening devotional time "family prayer time." Other faculty considered themselves part of a family while they were at Konnarock. Virginia Whittaker said,

Oh, yes, we [teachers] all lived right there; we had a dormitory, and we lived right there with the students. We were just one big family. It was great. I mean, some of the older faculty members sort of had a mother image. I guess I was kind of like a big sister when I was there. I thought it was great. I never knew of any conflicts between students and faculty. And the students got along well. They were kind of like sisters. [The discipline] was just like rules you have in the family. I mean, they had a bedtime; lights were supposed to be out at a certain time. I don't know whether they were always out or not, but I guess they had to clean their rooms and make their beds and be to meals on time and be to their job on time and do their job well. And I can't think of any really specific rules. They had to be close to school. They couldn't just go out anywhere unchaperoned. After all, they were somebody else's children that we were in charge of, but I can't remember

any real hard, specific rules we had other than what most good Christian families would have.

Emily Umbarger, whose mother was second principal, speaks of the students who attended during her mother's tenure as "Mother's girls."

Superintendent of the Southern Mountain Mission, Rev. Kenneth Hewitt, was called "Pop" by the students, and Principal Mildred Deal was known as Mama Deal or Mother Deal. According to the narrators, Mrs. Deal encouraged students to talk about any problems they faced. Peggie Baldwin reports, "*Mrs. Deal frequently said, 'First of all, we are a family. We are bound together, and when you hurt, we hurt.'*" In her final message on the school's closing, addressed to the women who had supported the work of Konnarock Training School, Principal Deal wrote, "I rejoice in this large family of spiritual children and of the *grandchildren* (what a meaningful name) that God has given me during these years" (Deal, 1959, p. 6).

The feeling of family was more than just words in a magazine. Although many of the items originally kept by teachers in students' permanent records now stored in the Virginia Synod Archives have been discarded, I found there enough wedding, birth, and graduation announcements, letters from former students, articles from newspapers, and pictures of children to realize the teachers kept the same kinds of mementos of their student's lives that parents do of their children's. According to LaVerne Kiser, another "family" practice often occurred at evening prayers. She said, "*In the earlier years, I wasn't there, but Lorraine said that they would bring letters from the former KTS students and from the old teachers and read those letters [to everyone].*" Many teachers helped students after they left the school. For example, Mrs. Deal became so close to one of the students that she paid her college tuition, and when Mrs. Deal died, the former student was listed in the obituary as her surviving foster daughter.

The KTS family, of course, was not bound by a biological connection; to be a part of this family was a matter of choice, a conscious decision. Was the KTS "family" simply a connection of friends? To draw a line between family and friends may not be

necessary, since both can provide support systems, support that is recognized in feminist theory as significant among women. Faculty and students formed friendships at KTS that sustained and encouraged them. “*Lifelong friendships developed,*” said Betty Reedy.

Geneva Shepherd spoke about her relationships with the friends she found at the school.

[One of my best friends] was in the same grade as me, and she just took to me right away, and helped me a lot. She took me under her wing. She was probably younger than me. Just more experienced. I hate it that we didn't keep in touch. But she was only there that one year. She didn't come back, and then she got married. She didn't even finish school. Well, we [all] just helped each other. A lot of [the girls] meant a lot to me as friends. I had a lot of friends. But I guess I wasn't really in with the in crowd, the ones that did all the crazy things. I enjoyed just about every minute of [my time at Konnarock]. It meant a lot to me, just to be able to learn and be with all the girls and everything. I never had many girls to be around; I was mostly around my brothers. The girls [my sisters] were all littler.

“*I made wonderful friends at Konnarock,*” said LaVerne Kiser.

Narrators also spoke of the friendships between teachers and students.

But the [teachers] were just more or less like us girls. At mealtimes, a teacher sat at each table. It was a happy time. We just laughed, you know, talked and laughed. It was a good time. (Geneva Shepherd)

I think with my experience at Konnarock and then being out in public schools, I was really closer to the children at Konnarock. And still have some friendships with these people, where in public school, I've lost contact. I think we were really closer [at KTS]. (Virginia Whittaker)

Laverne Spenser and Peggie Baldwin both remember teachers as friends, but saw them in different lights.

They [the teachers] were buddies. If we'd go play basketball, they were your buddies; they'd be right along beside you playing, so they became your buddies

out of the classroom, yet when they were in that classroom you saw them and respected them as a teacher. I think that was just their makeup because they were [living] there, too. And a lot of them were young, and so you saw them, and they presented themselves as your friends and your buddy. (Peggie Baldwin)

They were always friendly, and all like that, but the teachers stayed together. They would take us for walks; sometimes they'd go with us on walks, and that was okay, if they didn't go with us all the time. And I remember for Miss Ponwith, it was always kind of dull, but she would invite certain people to come into her room after study hall at night, and she would read stories. They were always religious stories, but if you got the invitation to her room, you went. And then there was Miss Bartolomei, [who] occasionally would serve you tea in her room, which was okay. If you were invited to Miss Bartolomei's room, you went, even though that forfeited some of your time. You know, they were good to you, really good to you. And when there were things to do, extra jobs to do, they would work right along with you, except Mrs. Deal. (LaVerne Kiser)

As in any boarding school or college, rooming assignments could present problems. Although frequently seniors would be assigned to room on the third floor of the building, room assignments were not made strictly according to age or grade. When the school building first opened, Dora remembers that an older girl would room with two or three younger ones, like an older sister. Eleven-year-old LaVerne roomed with her cousin Rose and other older girls during her first year. Although Geneva was not sure how roommates were determined, she said,

I don't remember anyone not getting along. I don't remember anybody ever changing rooms for that kind of reason. They might have made friends with somebody and changed, or asked to room together the next year, but not because they didn't get along.

However, LaVerne did remember one student in particular for whom rooming was a problem. *"There was one girl, bless her heart, nobody wanted to room with her. So they put her in a room, and then they moved her once or twice, but then they just left her."*

For many theorists, friendship is central to feminist ethics. By its nature, friendship involves individuals in upending the kinds of hierarchies and power that are prevalent in many other relationships (Haney 1994).

Friendship is a relation of mutuality, respect, fidelity, confidence, and affection. It is impossible in... competitive patterns, adversarial patterns, exploitive patterns, authoritarian patterns, and paternalistic patterns of relating. To begin to make friendship a reality is to begin acting as a friend. That is, to demonstrate in one's speech and behavior that one is not superior or inferior and that one will no longer countenance being related in those ways. (Haney, 1994, p. 6)

[There was a lot of] just laughing and teasing, and really the girls got along unusually well looking back on it, after having had children of my own and watching them with other children, the girls really got along unusually well when you look back on it. Considering we had such a mix. We had quite a few girls from the Boone area and Deep Gap when I was there, over in North Carolina. We had a few from farther away, and a few from right here, just like I was. But with the different backgrounds, I think they got along unusually well. (Betty Reedy)

The women who were part of the KTS experience were then doing, and have since carried out, what Anndee Hochman (1994) attributes to the women she wrote about in *Everyday Acts and Small Subversions*: “In trying to fashion lives of integrity and joy, [they] were changing not only their own relationships, the contours of their days. They were revising a centuries-old conversation about family; they made history daily, in their living rooms and kitchens” (p.vi). These women understood the “radical potential of daily life” (Weiss, 1995, p.16), and they were learning to extend their family to include the community of humankind.

Community

That we have sometimes fed each other in rough times does not mean that no one starved, or that we do not need to change the conditions that gave rise to the shortage. That we have sometimes enabled each other to resist does not mean we could not resist more completely and less self-destructively under other

circumstances, and does not lessen the evil we are resisting. There are cracks in patriarchy, and women's communities have lived in those spaces, have pushed back the borders, and have even done the hammering and chiseling to create and widen them. Women's experiences give us cause to be proud of a long-standing commitment to something far richer than patriarchy, and of our ability to use, with some successes, even our traditional roles and practices for the sake of our liberation. Penny A. Weiss (1995, p. 11)

Serene Jones (2000) identifies two fundamental questions feminists ask about community: “What is an ideal community?” and “How do we empirically define what ‘community’ is?” (p.128). Like *family*, the term *community* can produce a variety of images, and the family may or may not be considered one type of community, depending on one’s experiences of power within the family. Feminists have likewise regarded community as both a repressive and a liberating influence. Communities that exist to separate and confine, especially when imposed by the powerful, can be destructive. Many traditional communities have upheld gender-based hierarchies (Freidman, 1995). Because of this, some assume that all feminists define *community* in terms of women-only groups, but this assumption is incorrect. Women cannot flourish without the well-being and growth of all people; therefore, feminists are concerned with interconnecting communities that work toward the emancipation of all humanity.

Women in community in places like KTS are important, but so are all the many forms of community we encounter. The KTS community itself was both gendered and non-gendered, both self-contained and outward-reaching, a community with shifting contexts and an evolving focus. The school building did not exist to construct a shell around those within, but to give them the tools needed to help eliminate all forms of oppression. According to Weiss and Friedman (1995),

A community [may be labeled] as feminist when women rather than men establish the community or the roles and projects of women within it, and when it is dedicated to overcoming specifically gender-based obstacles to women’s survival and flourishing—as understood first and foremost by the women in the community. Traditional communities and feminist communities, however, are neither totally dissimilar nor radically disconnected. Both can be the sites of genuine friendship, social support, and collaborative political activism among

women. Women working within a traditional community can evolve together toward activities that unselfconsciously refashion the gender practices of those communities in substantially feminist directions. (p. xii)

KTS might be considered both a traditional community--a school under the direct supervision of the church--and a feminist community--one founded by women who carried out the day-to-day mission and one which blurred many traditional divisions among people and encompassed personal and political progress. Women there found both traditional and innovative ways to challenge their present and future status. Penny Weiss (1995) notes major themes in the literature concerning feminist communities. The first of these themes is that such communities “generally ignore the boundaries between friendships, families, the social, and the political, integrating them in a variety of ways....They [share] almost everything from clothes and chores to political actions and study groups” (p. 12). I have already written a great deal about how the household chores for students were equally distributed. While the narrators may not have looked forward to all the types of work required of them, no one expressed any dissatisfaction with the way chores were shared or with any of their fellow students for shirking responsibilities. Several women discussed how the girls pitched in to help each other when one wanted to go home for the weekend, needed to do something else, or simply wanted to avoid that particular chore at that time—the way family and friends help each other. There are other memories both of the care the girls gave to their peers and of that teachers gave to the girls.

Your mamma, I'll always love her because I liked to read, so instead of cooking and things like that, when the teacher would go out, Geneva would help me out on my cooking. (LaVerne Kiser)

I had helped [one of the girls] out a couple of times [when she wanted to go home]. She would always tune up and cry, and I'd see her, even out on the big front porch, and she'd be tuned up and crying her heart out, and I felt so sorry for her. But it was her job though; she was supposed to do it. But I felt so sorry for her. (Peggie Baldwin)

A second theme of feminist communities identified by Weiss (1995) is that of struggle. Those communities that flourish are those that provide a way for issues to be brought into the open and for conflict to be resolved (Weiss, 1995). Belenky et al., (1997) speak of what they call “public homeplaces,” places “where every voice is being heard, where the group’s action projects are designed to address the members’ most driving questions and concerns, and where all are supported to be the best they know how to be” (p. 15). KTS provided this atmosphere. The school was a community embracing feminist principles of inclusiveness, openness, and cooperation; however, there were the expected problems. Konnarock contained, after all, a school population of children with all the behaviors of typical children. Although disagreements were like small family quarrels, they did occur. Like many other adults, the narrators I spoke to look back on these childhood disagreements as a part of growing up. Dora said,

Everybody was pretty together with each other. They didn’t allow you to fight. Which I done a lot, and got put in the office. I’d pull hair; youngun like, I guess. And we were bad to play jokes on each other. I had this one friend, she said, “Let’s get some mice.” We knew where there was a bed of little mice. So this one girl bragged all the time, said, oh, she was getting a watch. I guess you know what we done. We wrapped them mice up, put them in a box, put Mary Belle Tipton on it, that’s who she was. Sent it to the Training School; wrote the real address and everything. When she opened that, four or five mice come out of there a flying. Did we ever get blessed! Yeah, they come out a-flying, scared her. She screamed. You could hear her all over the Training School.

LaVerne Kiser also remembers a disagreement she had with another student and how she and the other girl handled it.

You settled your differences. Because I remember Ruby and I got into it. If we didn’t like the clothes that we had to wear, we’d go borrowing each other’s clothes and things. It’s a wonder we didn’t wind up with lots of stuff. But Ruby had trouble getting along with people. And I remember one day, it was almost time for supper, and we’d gone out to shoot some basketball. I had on Ruby’s dress. I don’t know why; she got horribly mad at me. To my credit, I never did

get mad at anybody, not even my sisters and brothers when we were growing up. They'd get so mad at me, they could try to kill me. I was not mad at Ruby, but she was so mad at me. And the first thing I knew—we were playing basketball— she slammed that basketball at me, and I caught it. I just stopped, and she came over and hit me. You know, just started slapping me in the face. And I was not even mad at her. She was as mad as she could be, and I just got her by the hair of her head 'til she couldn't move too awful good. And then she got a hold of her dress and ripped it. I said, "Ruby, this is your dress." So we had a really good little fight there, but then they hollered; the bell rang. It was time for supper. So I had to go upstairs and change into something else 'cause she'd torn her dress—bad. So, I mean things were settled like that.

Betty Reedy also remembers that there were some disagreements among the girls, but does not recall any of these as serious.

You're going to have some squabbles. I mean, you don't get that many kids together without [some disagreements]. But I don't remember any really big horrendous falling-outs or fusses. Nit-picking.

This was also the faculty's perspective, at least as Virginia Whittaker remembers. *We just didn't have many discipline problems. We were just like one big family. Sometimes teenagers are temperamental and fly off a little fit. I wasn't' much beyond a teenager. I probably flew off a little bit, too. But we just didn't have any problems with discipline.*

Learning to work out differences they had with one another was another way the women and girls profited from their life at KTS. However, the girls were not angels. As the stories above and the following one illustrate, the students were real adolescents whose actions could be as reckless, silly, or thoughtless as those of any teenagers.

The third floor was [for] the senior girls. They always got up there, and the lower grade girls lived downstairs. Half of the third floor was attic that we could hang our clothes in on rainy days and that kind of thing. One night I went up to the

attic. I had clothes hanging up there, and it was after dark. If you looked out the attic window, you could see the girls' light shining from their windows over there in their rooms. And whatever possessed me, I don't know, but I decided wouldn't it be funny to crawl out that attic window and crawl across the roof and scratch on the screen and scare those girls. So I did. And of course, all they could see was there was someone outside the screen, 'cause the light was shining out. They all ran screaming, "Oh, there's a man on the roof." So when they came by the attic door, I just blended in the crowd screaming, "Oh, there's a man on the roof," and went back downstairs, and they had poor Mr. Hayes, the custodian, come over and search the grounds and look all around. And I never told that story until long after I left that school. One of my good friends was a senior that year, but I did not tell that story for quite some time. Well, I look at it now and look at that roof and can't believe that I crawled from the attic window over to that without falling off and killing myself. But you know, what possesses kids? But I didn't tell that one for a long time. If one of my kids had done that, I would have been mortified!
(Betty Reedy)

KTS was not an ideal community, but its vision was ever on that goal. Serene Jones (2000) calls this forward-looking yet realistic view the feminist "pragmatic utopian impulse" (p.131). Women's efforts to achieve the possibilities of their visions is a "struggle that gives power, strength, hope, and concreteness to these new visions. In turn, the vision gives direction to women's struggles. Through political action for social transformation, women's theologizing is verified" ("Methodology," ¶5). Implicit within feminist theology is the call to take direct action toward the abolition of all oppressions, in whatever forms they may be found since each type of oppression both feeds on and nourishes other oppressions (Haney, 1994). Mission workers quickly identified the most pressing need of the community surrounding Konnarock:

A trained health worker. Housing conditions, home sanitation, the care of expectant mothers, the feeding of children, and home care of the sick are subjects upon which instruction is most woefully needed. The opportunities for the

community nurse are limited only by her physical endurance. (“Our Mountain Work,” p.272)

Nurses hired to be part of the KTS staff understood that their obligations extended far beyond the grounds of the school. Miss Ida Twedten was not only provided with a car to travel to local homes, but with a horse for times when the people who needed her were too far from the passable roads for her to reach them. She was also given a large shepherd dog as company and protection when she traveled. During the winter of 1936-37, Miss Twedten treated or helped to treat 339 influenza cases and 15 pneumonia cases (Butler, 1937). She proudly reported that none of the individuals died from these illnesses that were often fatal in the mountains.

To teach lessons in preventive medicine and childcare, Miss Twedten began a mother’s club in the Konnarock community.

[The mother’s club] was Miss Twedten’s doing as a means of promoting better health in the community. She was a nurse, an older woman even at that time, maybe in her late forties or fifties. She had been a Red Cross nurse in Europe during World War I, had a wealth of experience, and was very dedicated to the work. And I think she saw the mothers’ club as a means of, well, frankly giving the women the afternoon off once in a while and getting away from the family. Somebody else could take care of the children for a little while. And also to promote the preventive care kind of things that she was very much involved with, and try to make a healthier community, better diets and that kind of thing which she could take up with the group of women. And Miss Twedten in particular was just a godsend in her mothers’ club and things that she did to improve daily living—the need for cleanliness, the need for good meals, and keeping the children clean and so forth. She was in a position to have a major influence at that time, and I think she did, in teaching by example as much as by word. But I think the mothers’ club was an organization that had great importance at that time. I think the way she went about that in helping the women to be better able to

meet their daily needs as mothers and wives, even more than community people, was a great contribution. (Emily Umbarger)

Dora Testerman remembers accompanying Miss Twedten to some meetings of the Mother's Club.

Some of [the women] didn't understand Miss Twedten, but they'd come with their babies. They would try to have a little lunch for them. Several of them, some fifteen or twenty of a time, here they all came, carrying their babies. And you know, most of them had to walk. They didn't have cars. Some of the babies I would tend to and play with, and some of them I wouldn't because they smelled so bad. They didn't, you know, have good health for their baby. They hadn't changed their clothing. As soon as they came in and [Miss Twedten] smelled them, she changed them. She'd keep a bunch of diapers and clothing for the mothers to take home with them. But most of them came clean and would have the baby all cleaned up, because Miss Twedten examined the baby and examined the mother nearly every time [they met]. Then Miss Twedten, she'd teach health classes—how to take care of themselves, a certain way to wash the baby—she was so clean, and she'd teach you to be clean. And she taught about nutrition.

The care given to local people, many of whom had no connection with either the church or the school, was sometimes extraordinary. For example, the first patient in the health center building constructed on the school grounds was a premature baby, “a frail, pitiful, little thing...[with] little or no chance of survival” (Dyer, 1937b, p.146). Nurses Ida Twedten and Anna Doldren kept “Little Joe” at the center for three weeks, caring for him around the clock, letting him sleep in the doll basket used for demonstrations in home nursing classes. At the end of the three weeks, the baby went home a healthy infant (Dyer, 1937b). As far as I have been able to determine, this exceptional care was given without cost to the family.

Another example of exceptional care given by the nurses occurred in March 1943. Sister Sophia Moeller was summoned to deliver a child at a home several miles from her

home at the Whitetop Health Center. Sister Sophie had provided prenatal care for the mother and knew her services would be needed soon. However, this trip up the mountain would be different. “Every day for two weeks, snow had drifted out of bleak leaden March skies—piled in great drifts, blocking all highways” (Hewitt, 1943, n.p.). The weather conditions were so bad, the drifts so deep, that Sister Sophie knew neither her car nor a horse would make it to the home. She walked more than five miles to aid the mother only to find that the mother would need a caesarian. The nearest hospital was forty-five miles away. A doctor agreed with Sister Sophia’s judgment, and contact was made with the nearest train station asking that the train be delayed until the woman could be transported the five miles (Hewitt, 1943, n.p.). The mother was wrapped in blankets and placed on a sled hitched to horses. When the horses could not travel any further, a total of thirty-five men worked to get the mother through the drifts and to the train station. Sister Sophia accompanied her every step of the way and rode the train with her to the hospital in Abingdon where a caesarean was performed, saving both her and the baby. An article about the event included the following statement:

Behind this story we find the church in her ministry of mercy; the contributions of many to mission work; the diaconate and the self-sacrifice of a courageous deaconess, who modestly and humbly considered her part in this race for life “just another day’s work.” (Hewitt, 1943)

Other examples of remarkable care included ministering to the spiritual needs of the mountain people. Dora Testeman reported traveling with Nurse Twedten when the patient would be beyond the medical assistance the nurse could provide.

She’d go and pray over them. In fact, she’d baptize people. I went with her one time up at Whitetop. And this boy died, but before he died, she baptized him. They said she was something in the army that she could baptize army boys. And she’d baptize them before they died.

Acceptance by the mountain people of both physical and spiritual ministering from women attests to the ability of the school to make itself a part of the surrounding community. In the first informational pamphlet about the school, the Woman’s

Missionary Society was cautioned that acceptance by the local community might not be easy to achieve.

One of the first difficulties which the worker in the mountains sections has to face is the suspicious attitude of the people themselves. They do not take readily to the ideas of strangers, and they have had occasion to be mistrustful of those, who, in recent years, have come among them and have exploited them in various ways.
(Morehead, n.d.)

Although Mrs. Morehead may have had a point about exploitation, she may have underestimated both the women who served and the mountain people themselves.

Community, or at least the possibility of community within the context of KTS, connotes a group “bound by a shared purpose and common practices,” an entity in time and space where “there is trust, safety, delight, intimate knowledge, and reciprocal accountability” (Jones, 2000, p. 126). As part of the church, Konnarock Training School understood community to go beyond its front doors; its mission extended to many areas of life throughout the mountains.

I think it was a quality of caring, of wanting to reach as many people as possible, primarily students, but through them their communities as well as our community and make an influence for good. Whether it's just better, healthier, happier lives, living. Of course, we can't forget the fact that the church hopefully plays in that, but there was—it never was used so far as I know for really a propaganda point.
(Emily Umbarger)

The idea of the church, and in this case church school, as welcoming community for all is appropriate from a feminist perspective (Russell, 2001), since “feminist theology is communal theology” (Collins, 1974, p. 7, emphasis added). For many years, Konnarock had a special “Christmas tree” for local residents. At this time, the staff tried to provide some small gift for every man, woman or child present—a toy or warm garment for the children, an apron or handkerchiefs for the women, perhaps a shirt or warm hat for the men.

And they'd have a Christmas play. And a big Christmas tree that touched the loft in the hallway. Everybody in the community would get a present. We Training School girls wouldn't, because ours was separate, but the mothers and the fathers, or if they had two or three kids, every one of the kids would get a toy. And the man and woman, [the man would] maybe get one of the chambray shirts. And the mommy'd get maybe a flannel nightgown or something. But every one of them would get a Christmas present. And then some of the older girls would make cookies, but we never would serve them [visitors] coffee of the night when we had these parties. They'd give them Kool-Aid or milk. We had plenty of milk. We had milk cows. (Dora Testerman)

Gifts for the local population arrived at Konnarock from throughout the United States, uniting many communities to make Christmas in the mountains possible. Helen Dyer reported that in 1936, almost “three hundred boxes from two hundred fifty sources in twenty-five states and the District of Columbia” containing goods for the school and for community outreach arrived at KTS (Dyer, 1937). I am sure other contributions were sent to Miss Jeffcoat at the Wataugua mission in North Carolina. It is astounding at a time when the country was in the midst of the Great Depression that so many individuals and churches could come together to support the mountain work. This type of concern for the well being of others is community at its best.

One particular effort on behalf of others paid dividends for the girls at the school. In the winter of 1947, there was a new FM radio station atop Whitetop Mountain where an engineer, his wife, and an announcer were staying. A series of severe winter storms left the station stranded amid twelve- to fifteen-foot snowdrifts. Attempts were made to fly supplies in to the group, but each try met more bad weather. When the still operational radio station announced that the three had only one can of peas left, Rev. Kenneth Hewitt took action. He somehow obtained a bulldozer, loaded it with supplies from the school farm, and made a ten-mile, seven-hour journey up the mountain. In appreciation for what Pastor Hewitt and the farm had done, the radio station WOPI invited him and the KTS choir to conduct a 30-minute radio program each Sunday night (“Mountain Mission

Bulldozes,” 1946-47). Not only did the choir sing from atop the mountain, but they traveled to the main station in Bristol and made several recordings.

We got together this choir, which I know you have heard of—the Iron Mountain boys and KTS girls—and Ken Hewitt and Pastor Hewitt, they had the evening vespers service at 6 o’clock on Sunday afternoon. Sometimes they would take us to Bristol, to WOPI FM studios, and they made big records, and they’d play them over the air at 6 o’clock on Sunday. But, weather permitting, good weather, we’d ride up to the top of the mountain and broadcast at 6 o’clock. That was the first FM station in this country. Nobody could get it in; Rose’s mom got an FM radio, and they said you could hear it; but you couldn’t really hear anything at all. But that was wonderful, going up there and broadcasting. We had beautiful music. I got some of those [records], after the training school closed. Preacher Lady gave me some of those. But I don’t have anything to play them on now. But that was good. (LaVerne Kiser)

The larger community was always welcomed at the school for “Little Red Wagon parties,” May Day celebrations, plays, and other programs. Every narrator remembers with fondness the weekly “Little Red Wagon” parties. Geneva Shepherd describes this unique custom.

We just went down in the dining room, put the tables back and set the chairs around the outside. And the community kids could come in, too, and we’d just have games. Everybody seemed to look forward to it, especially Little Red Wagon, where we played the piano, and we’d line up; I guess it was kind of like dancing or something. We’d choose a partner and we’d dance around, and then that one would take one and just dance around and around. It was really fun. It must have been, ‘cause we did it for years, every Saturday night, or most every Saturday night that’s what we did. But it was fun just to be there and be together and do things, have somebody to do things with.

The school was the center for a lot of things in the community. A lot of the local ladies over there came up and did jobs and helped us. We made apple butter

outdoors in the big old kettles, and they came up, some of the local ladies, and helped with that and taught us how to do it. On Saturday nights it was the social center sort of for the area because we had, you can't say open house, and you can't say a party, but the local people used to come in and we'd have games. You could play either board games, or we had, you know, like the Virginia Reel and that kind of thing. And of course, a lot of the young guys came, but other people came, too. And I remember when I was there some of the local people that used to come in and sing for us on Sunday afternoon with guitars. And I think the whole community was happy the school was there. I mean, they just accepted us as part of the community. (Betty Reedy)

Church services were also community events. Students would sometimes attend St. Matthew Lutheran Church in the village of Konnarock, and then the congregation of that church would attend service in the school chapel. Later, after Laurel Valley was constructed, Geneva remembers, “*We'd go for walks and ride the back of the pickup truck. Sometimes we'd have to do that to go to church. Sometimes we'd go to church up at Laurel Valley and sometimes down at St. Matthews. And then they'd take turns; they'd have it at the chapel.*” Students at both KTS and the Iron Mountain School for Boys grew to feel a part of the community through these shared experiences.

In addition to opening its doors to the community, Konnarock students and faculty went out into the surrounding communities to supply whatever services they could. Summer Bible schools, discussed in Chapter 2, were held on the KTS site, but many more were held throughout the mountain region of Virginia and North Carolina. The Bible schools reached their pinnacle in 1938 when “25 schools enrolled 2,232 pupils, teachers, and officers” including “21 volunteer teachers from six states” (Kepner & Gable, 1939, p. 14). It is impossible to measure the effects of these outreach efforts on the health, educational, and spiritual lives of the mountain people.

Writer Iris Marion Young (1995) is critical of the ideal of community, because, she says, community can foster prejudice against and opposition to those who are not

members and because the ideal of community represents a leap from the present social structure to one that denies the strengths of the present. This is not what KTS did. It was a community that built upon the inherent and existing positive aspects of the broader culture in which it existed.

For instance, Konnarock Training School began with what looks like a simple enough problem—supplying good elementary, vocational, and religious training to children who otherwise would not get even these minimum essentials....

Workers [became] more than ever conscious of the needs of the homes as well as in the pupils themselves. Local needs are so similar to those in the homes and communities from which boarding students come, that it has come to be felt that the more our center could reach out to help this community, and the more it could enter into community life instead of being just a sheltered group of girls who were being given very special educational and living privileges, the more lasting would be the effect. (Dyer, 1934)

At any one time, individuals are enmeshed in various “identity-defining” communities (Freidman, 1995, p. 194). In some cases a repressive moral authority and an inherent hierarchy exist within these communities; they can be agents of suppression rather than of nurture. Community without means of critique or without recognition of autonomy of self is not the kind of social order feminists advocate. The way each of the integrated communities of which the women at Konnarock Training School were a part helped shape their identities and develop a positive sense of self that has carried them through their lives, is the subject of the following section.

Identity

It is a story which has linked the continents and the ages; wherever people have walked, stories have gone with them. Alone among the animals, these story-makers have thus imposed unanimity upon chaos and the divergent. Our very nature is predisposed to story, for here all is invented and explained. Story is that medium by which we know ourselves. Jill F. Kealey McRae (1994)

The premise behind oral history is that the life story of an individual has value. Our narratives are the means through which we make sense of our lives and play a central role in the formation of self (Borland, 1991; Bruner, 1990; Clandinnin & Connelly, 2000; Greene, 1991; Lieblich & Josselson, 1994; McEwan & Egan, 1995; McRae, 1994; Ochberg, 1994; Smith, 2000; Steedman, 2000; Witherspoon & Noddings, 1991). It is often through stories that we express our identities (Oplatka, 2001). Writing of the value of narrative research, Josselson & Lieblich (1993) say, “Listening to people talk in their own terms about what had been significant in their lives seem[s] to us far more valuable than studying preconceived psychometric scales or contrived experiments” (p. ix). Researchers Witherspoon and Noddings (1991) say that those who are involved in the work of “telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories—one’s own and others’ . . . can penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of the self and the integrity of the other, and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities” (p. 4). A story involves storytelling--a reciprocal event between a teller and an audience. When we tell stories about our lives we perform our (preferred) identities (Langellier 2001). As a social interaction, oral history provides the narrator not only with the opportunity to tell his or her life story, but also with a method through which identity may be wrought (Oplatka, 2001).

Perhaps the most striking theme to emerge from the stories of the Konnarock Training School women is the conviction that the school constituted a critical part of their lives, one that dramatically affected the lives they lived then and that molded their personal identities. The women and girls who came to KTS for one reason or another were individuals with unique personalities, goals, and understandings of themselves, but each feels she was transformed by her connection to the school. Cote and Levine (2002)

believe the “basis of human identity throughout history” has been a “sense of self-definition rooted in a community of others” (p. 2). Identity is a fluctuating social and individual construct, depending on our own individuality (ego and personality) and on the cultural contexts in which we interact (Cote & Levine, 2002; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 1998).

The development of a strong sense of self is enhanced when one receives positive response from those with whom she comes in contact. Students at KTS felt their teachers cared about their welfare.

The teachers were truly, I think, interested in the girls, well boys, too, but because we lived with the teachers all the time, I think they were really interested in the students and in them doing well, and encouraging and helping people who needed help. I'm sure [the girls] would all have a teacher they could go to. I felt particularly close to Rose because she was from this part of the country. I knew her real well. But I wouldn't have hesitated to go talk to Mrs. Deal if I had had a problem. Probably, I felt closer to Rose and Helen Huston than any of the others, but I wouldn't have hesitated to go talk to Mrs. Deal, the principal. They had an open door policy, so that [you could talk] if you felt the need. (Betty Reedy)

I think [KTS was unique in] accepting all of us. Now we came from different backgrounds here in the hills, maybe the same—barefooted and ignorant and naked. But we came from different backgrounds, and I think that acceptance of all of us [was important]. We were all accepted; we were all expected to do our best; and you know when you see a kid that you expect to do its best and let it know, it's going to do its best. And we were trusted. We knew we were trusted. We weren't watched like a hawk. We had our rules and we were expected to go by them, but we just knew what was expected of us. And basically, we were pretty daggone good younguns anyway. But it was a good place. (LaVerne Kiser)

Identity is in part formed by the groups to which one belongs and by the naming of oneself as being a part of a community.

Our names... bring a mixed legacy of burden and hope. Names attach us to our families and tell us who we are supposed to be. The names are like envelopes, carrying the stories of our pasts, the expectations for our futures. (Hochman, 1994, p. 181)

Seven of the eight narrators in this study named themselves as Lutheran.² The eighth, Rose Cox, also named a religious affiliation, Methodist. The women's selection for the interviews was not on the basis of their present denominational preference, but only on the fact that they had a past connection to KTS. Some of the women were Lutheran before they came to the school, but not all were. It is not possible for me to know the percentage of past graduates and faculty who have remained Lutheran, nor is it important at this point. What I do find noteworthy is how each of these women continues to feel her spiritual identity was deeply affected by her time at KTS, that her moral self was given structure there.

[At Konnarock, we were taught] the importance of participating in church services, of volunteering, [for things like] Bible School, just proving that you can do [things]. And to follow the Golden Rule, and help somebody today. There's a hymn—it's an old hymn—that I think of, having an opportunity to do something to help someone. And sometimes it's just as telephone call to someone that is elderly and lonely. [We were given] just preparation for life, wherever you were. And [learned] to witness, to be comfortable witnessing, because we were doing that all the time, So, like the hymn we sing, "We've a Story to Tell the Nation," we can't all be missionaries, but we can have an impact in our community. (Rose Kirby)

While it may be argued that the Christian faith represented a "community of origin" for the students, Christianity became a "community of choice," a "community of mature self-identification" for the women (Freidman, 1995, p. 197-198). Embracing the name *Christian* places the individual within certain commonalities, but her identity is constantly being transformed within the lived experience of relationship to God. For the

² *Lutheran* is used throughout to refer to the United Lutheran Church of America, which is one of the predecessors of the present Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The ideas discussed do not apply equally to all Lutheran sects. For example, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod does not share many of the doctrines of the ELCA, including the ordination of women.

Christian, responsibilities to the name are carried out in love and faith in response to God's love. To choose to be Christian and thus "to name yourself is to feel fully the weight of your own voice" (Hochman, 1994, p. 183).

For those women who identify themselves as Lutheran, there is also a deep sense of tradition that is part of their makeup. The Lutheran church service is highly liturgical, following an established order of worship. Symbols of the church achieve great significance. The seasons of the church year are carefully observed with paraments of symbolic colors. Doors of the churches are usually painted red. The Lutheran denomination looks to its past with great pride, for example, celebrating Reformation Day as part of each church year, and I, as one Lutheran, feel chills when the organ and congregation break into strains of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," written by Martin Luther. Many members of the Lutheran faith internalize this sense of tradition, causing some criticism of the church for emphasizing the past too much, for relying too much on the authority of ritual. At times and in some places, this criticism has been warranted, yet at many other junctures, the church has been a leading influence in reform and inclusiveness. Lutherans try to love and respect traditions without letting tradition become the object of worship. The denomination has for many years recognized women as an integral part of the church and was one of the first mainstream denominations to ordain women. The women I interviewed have built their lives on a solid foundation from the past, but their eyes have been focused on the future.

I was baptized in the Lutheran church here. It was the old building that was here before the new one was built. We got married in the old one. My mother was raised Methodist, but when she married Dad and came up here, there was no Methodist church and she went to the Lutheran church. My grandfather was one of the ones that worked with Pastor Kenneth Killinger in starting the Lutheran church in this area, my grandfather Weaver. So I've always been Lutheran. (Betty Reedy)

I basically grew up in a Methodist church. I was almost thirteen when we came to Konnarock. And I frankly did not like the Lutheran Church. I did not understand all this walking back and forth and standing and sitting and the vestments and the altar hangings and all the things that mean so much to me now were completely just like a new language. And it took me a while to be a Lutheran, and patience on Pastor Ludwig's part, but it finally took. Now, I won't say that I would not [attend another church], or I'm not putting any other church down, but I hope I will always be where there is a Lutheran church because I very much appreciate the traditions and the way that things are handled. I like the service; there are many things that please me about it. I'm sure there are many things that I haven't experienced in a larger church, but while I'm here, it's nice to be with a group that's small enough to know each other and be interested in what's going on in each other's lives and so forth. (Emily Umbarger)

It has been said that there are two types of moral development: responsibility and rights (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1987). Researchers argue that a moral awareness of responsibility is developed more fully in those people “whose conceptions of self are rooted in a sense of connection and relatedness to others,” but that the awareness of rights is more developed in those who experience a sense of independence and detachment from others (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 8). Lila Abu-Lughod (1995) studied a community of Bedouin women and reported that the separation of women from men enabled women to acquire a sense of “social responsibility” as they managed their own day-to-day existence. The women at KTS also ran the school and the household themselves, with only occasional infringement from men. Teaching assignments, duties, student chores, meals, finances, and discipline were all under the management of the women themselves. Each person, from the principal to the youngest pupil, had her duties, understood those duties, and accepted responsibility for carrying them out. This sense of responsibility became a part of the women's identities. “Managing their own affairs allows women to develop both competence and dignity” (Abu-Lughod, 1995). Like the organizations discussed in *A Tradition Without a Name*, KTS fostered a “learning [environment] that enabled people to cultivate more powerful

ways of knowing, a greater sense of self, and a connectedness to others” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 8).

It is this connectedness and sense of self that Peggie Baldwin feels is the deepest legacy of KTS.

Anybody that it ever touched, their lives were truly enriched by the teaching, and even those kids that were day students just feel a great, great sense of belonging, and I think that was really the biggest thing that the school instilled in kids. It left them with the feeling of belonging, in the community too, and in the school. The school played such a big part in the whole community.

The belief that certain experiences are transforming requires that an individual have a “framework of dichotomous ...selves” (Honig, 1997, ¶ 56). She must be able to see herself both before and after the life-changing event.

I really don't know how to put into words [the difference KTS made in my life]. I know it made a huge difference; I looked at things a lot different. I knew more about how to face life, the problems, and the things you face in life. Just life in general. (Geneva Shepherd).

When Betty Reedy accompanied her husband to other countries, she felt her years at Konnarock had prepared her for new experiences.

With my husband's job, we went overseas twice, and we moved around a lot because of his job, and because I had been [at KTS] and we had had at different times—well, we had Mrs. Steinsnider who was from a different country. One year, one summertime when I was there we had a small group of Japanese students. I don't recall the adults; I recall the students, but there must have been adults, that came for a little while. And we had people as I said that came from Philadelphia and other places that at that time seemed so far away to me, but I was exposed to people from outside my immediate community, more than I would have been if I had stayed right here and gone to school. I think that was a benefit to me when we

moved around so much and went and lived in foreign countries. Having had just a little bit of exposure to people from other places, I think it was a benefit.

LaVerne Kiser sees the changes she underwent at Konnarock as caused both by the experiences she encountered and by adjustments she made.

[When I graduated] knew a lot more people from a lot more places. I was much more sophisticated. I learned a lot, like how to get along with people. Because over home, everybody was family all around. But over there [at Konnarock] you had to kind of trim your edges.

Konnarock teacher Virginia Whittaker feels she, too, was transformed by her time at KTS.

I think [the time I was at KTS] made me a better person. It was a wonderful experience, and I wouldn't give anything for it. It's like many of the students have told me; they wouldn't give anything for the years at Konnarock. And I don't regret at all that I was there. I just think being there made me a better person — just the influence of the wonderful people that I met and lived with.

The changes wrought in the women were not simply superficial, outward adaptations made to make their lives at the school comfortable, but were in many cases profound and deep-seated.

You know, I feel the school and the teaching and the teachers and just the whole combined body of that school played a great part in your life. What it gave to us just carried us forever. I still feel that closeness. I still feel a sense of that belonging. (Peggie Baldwin)

Comments such as these from the narrators are consistent with Cote and Levine's (2002) belief that "if a strong sense of ego identity is nurtured and reinforced in [individual's] lives, they should feel a sense of continuity with the past, meaning in the present, and direction for the future" (p.121). For these narrators, their identities are relational; family is important to all of them; all speak of their involvement with others.

So I think that at this stage of the game, a lot of it is about friendships and shared experiences that help to shape us into be what we are today, whether that's good or bad or both, hopefully not all bad. I feel that I have, in case of the Training School in particular, I've had the advantage of knowing a good many people in both generations, not just the ones I was in school with and my teachers and so forth, but a number of Mother's girls, as I call them, and teachers from that time who were very close friends. (Emily Umbarger)

My family [is my greatest success]. I had good family to start with. I had good family and then I guess I've just been lucky. (LaVerne Kiser)

Even though these women make their own decisions about how to live their lives, they do not see themselves as disconnected, autonomous units whose choices have no effects on others. In fact, the opposite is true; they hope their individual choices have improved the lives of their families and communities.

I think because I went away at that age and stayed away from home, it was much easier for me to go to college. I was the youngest girl in my dorm my freshman year, and I was probably one of the few that did not get homesick, because I'd already been away. I think the things that were instilled in me, to do the best you can, just because it's a job you need to do and that kind of thing, well, you know, they just ingrained in us you tell the truth and you do what's right because it's right. And that I think has been one thing that has been with me all my life. I spent seven years on the Grayson County Board of Supervisors, and I think a lot of the way I looked at things as a county was influenced by the things I learned at Konnarock at that young age. I really do. (Betty Reedy)

American society, indeed that of much of the world, is rooted in a culture of “conflict and competition” (Friedman, 1995, p. 188). Culture teaches it is acceptable to grasp all one can, to do anything necessary to move ahead of the next person. However, when one begins to see self in terms of a connection to others, these values lose their appeal and “are replaced with alternative visions of the foundation of human society

derived from nurturance, caring attachment, and mutual interestedness” (Friedman, 1995, p. 188).

There was so much kindness, and so much goodness within those walls that I think that you would have to get everybody’s young memory from a way back to really [understand]. I’m sure that a lot of them realized, once they left the school, how important the school was to all of us. And the good teachings that we had there! I mean, it follows you all the days of your life. And that is the one thing that you’ve got, you will remember that. (Peggie Baldwin)

“Once a sense of ego identity is established, people are buffered from the vicissitudes of social conflicts and tensions” (Cote and Levine, 2002, p. 16). Betty Reedy told me that every major decision of her adult life has been informed by her Konnarock experience. Peggie Baldwin appreciates the sense of well being fostered in KTS. “[*When you first came to KTS*] you were scared to death, but we had so many good things, and so many mothers, and so many sisters, that you did feel secure in that school.” Developing a strong sense of self enables individuals to see beyond themselves and to confident that they can make a difference in the world.

A Tradition of Leadership

“How can we help students to understand that the tragedy of life is not death; the tragedy is to die with commitments undefined and convictions undeclared and service unfulfilled?”

Vachel Lindsay

Appalachian scholar Barbara Smith (1999) feels that for too long the conception of the region has been that of the mountaineer, and that women, other than in the role of support for their men, have been omitted.

Female agency..., sexism, gender trouble--all the basic stuff of women’s history—are literally inconceivable. Writing women into the history of Appalachia then is a contradiction in terms. Either our constructs of the region or women themselves must succumb, one to the other. (Smith, 1999, p. 2)

In traditional Christian theology, one of the seven deadly sins is pride, and in fact may be *the* ultimate sin (Collin, 1974). For feminist theologians, women's sin "lies not in being proud, but rather in their self-effacing, submissive, or subservient behavior" (Finson, 1995). Both Finson (1995) and Jones (2000) redefine redemption for women as the possibility for their full personhood, their own identities, and their own lives. The mission of Konnarock Training School was to help women reach their potential and to step forward as leaders in their families, their church, and their communities—to find redemption and fullness. Students were taught, by example and by word, that they had a place in the church, that to be Christian meant women did not have to accept whatever social and economic circumstances they found themselves in, and that they could make decisions about their own lives. Students received positive affirmation of their abilities and their dreams; they learned that God loved them, and they developed skills that would help them assure they, their communities, and their churches could thrive. The day-to-day examples given to the students became a scaffold for social change; in short, KTS encouraged the women to become authors of their own lives.

No doubt the women who came to Konnarock in the earliest years were influenced by the first wave of feminism. They had been given the right to vote; they had benefited from college educations; they had heard Margaret Sanger and others advocate women's right to birth control. In 1914, Walter Lippmann wrote of the power of the first wave of feminism:

The effect of the woman's movement will accumulate with the generations. The results are bound to be so far-reaching that we can hardly guess them today. For we are tapping a reservoir of possibilities when women begin to use not only their generalized womanliness but their special abilities. For the child it means... a change in the very conditions where the property sense is aggravated and where the need for authority and individual assertiveness is built up. The greatest obstacles to a cooperative civilization are under fire from the feminists. Those obstacles today are more than anything else a childhood in which the antisocial impulses are fixed. The awakening of women points straight to the discipline of

cooperation. And so it is laying the real foundations for the modern world.
(Lippman, 1914; Qtd. in Scott, 1971, p. 161).

The act of founding Konnarock Training School was a way of bringing the freedom and opportunity of a modern world to the seclusion of the mountains. Like the authors of *A Tradition That Has No Name*, the moment I began to look for strong women leaders associated with Konnarock, I found them everywhere (Belenky et al., 1986).

Many of the women who chose to come to Konnarock were single women, and some remained single their entire lives; for instance, three of the women spoken of most highly by the narrators, Miss Ida Twedten, Miss Sadie Ponwith, and Sister Sophia Moeller, never married. In words and actions, the school was preparing girls for marriage, yet the examples students saw were often in opposition to the “necessity” of “finding” a husband. Mrs. Mildred Deal was married when she became principal of KTS but came alone to the school to live and work. She and her husband divorced during her tenure, and she remained at the school. Whether to marry or not, how and with whom one lives her life, should be a choice open to all women, but in the first part of the twentieth century, it was expected that women would become wives to fulfill their lives. Even today, “to be a healthy, fulfilled, unpartnered woman is to wrestle with one of society’s most cherished precepts” (Hochman, 1994, p. 41). In challenging the roles society expected, single women could “become outlaws, claiming marginal territory” (Hochman, 1994, p. 42). How remarkable the women of the Southern Mountain Mission must have been in their day, to have taken charge of their own lives on their own terms and to have become so accepted by the male-dominated society of Appalachia.

By enlarging the conception of family, by envisioning “a common good outside the self and the privatized family,” these women were able to resist the notion of women’s “economic dependence on a male and on marriage” (Weiss, 1995, p. 10). However, not everyone who knew them felt the women were living “proper” women’s lives. Those involved in the mission work were well aware that their life choices challenged traditional gender roles and were capable of seeing their situations with

humor. Miss Cora Jeffcoat included the following in one of her monthly reports to the Missionary Society:

February. Yesterday I had a blow out that delayed me for two hours. When I had just about finished the job, a man came along and offered his assistance. He seemed a bit surprised that a woman could help herself in case of a puncture, and said: "Why don't you get you a man to do such things for you? You're too good-looking a woman to do this.....I always thought if a woman was any account she got married." When I get the new tires I will have good ones all around and will not likely need "a man to do such things" for me for some time. (Jeffcoat, 1925, original punctuation)

Nurses such as Ida Twedten and Sister Sophia Moeller served as midwives in the mountain area, often providing the only medical attention a pregnant woman would receive. In addition, these nurses and other women who came to KTS were metaphoric midwives, ushering new ways of life into being in the mountains. "Midwife leaders" have existed in many places and cultures, encouraging more egalitarian ideals, listening to all voices, seeking the good within people and their communities on which they are able to build, and helping "the people reach high, stretching themselves in ways they would not have dreamed possible....giving names to things that have gone unnamed" (Belenky et al., 1997, p.15).

The women associated with the school not only stressed education for their students, but saw its importance in their own lives. Mary Phlegar Smith left Konnarock to pursue a graduate degree, as did later principal Betty Deck. Other faculty continued their studies during summers or leaves of absence. Peggie Baldwin remembers when Mother Deal took a leave of absence to continue her studies.

[She] took off and went back to the seminary to study. And I missed her so much; I just missed seeing her. Mother Deal was just a proud, very proud lady; she was proud of the school; she was proud of everything. They had somebody [fill in as principal] until Mrs. Deal came back. But I can assure you that everything was taken care of! Mrs. Deal would have never left us otherwise. But she wanted to

go and get some more Bible study in. She said she needed it for that school. She had big dreams. She used to tell me about them, talk to me about them; she said, "Peggie, you've got to have big dreams. This school is a dream. It's a big dream. This is a wonderful dream, this school." And she built her whole life around that school. She really did. And she would make you dream of good things that could be there.

Catherine Cox Umbarger and her sister Cordelia were pioneers in the field of social work. Both graduated from the Richmond School of Social Work during the "progressive" era, an age with a strong emphasis on reform. The specifics emphasized by progressive educational reform included "innovations in school curriculum" and "the importing of scientific management into school administration" (Urban and Wagoner, 200, p. 201). Umbarger, following recommendations of the study in which she and her sister were instrumental, launched ideas along this line at KTS. In their work and in their lives, Catherine and Cordelia exemplified the "new woman" of the twentieth century. Emily Umbarger remembers her mother and aunt as forward-thinking, remarkable women.

Of course, [Mother and her sister] went to Marion College. [Grandfather] was president of the college at that time, and they naturally went to Marion College. My aunt was particularly interested in social work. I think she would have done that whether. Mother would have been just as interested in something in teaching, or I think she even had the home ec. idea at one time. But Granddaddy wanted the two girls to be in the big, bad city by themselves. He wanted them to live together. There was just thirteen months between them in age, so they were in the same class. And both of them worked one year out of college. Mother sort of managed the dining room at Marion and planned menus and bought what was needed to run the college dining room. My aunt taught at Old Ebenezer for at least a year after she graduated. Then they went to Richmond together and got their training for social work that way. When they went, it was called the Richmond School of Social Work, which had some alliance with William and Mary. Actually, their degrees were from William and Mary. But Mother said graduation day was the

only day she was ever on campus as a student. It probably was as good a training as was available at time.

My aunt stayed in the field all her life with some very notable positions. She was in the administration part of the Virginia State Welfare Department—it was still called Welfare in those days. And I think probably in the forties Cordelia was teaching there [at the School of Social Work], but she also worked for the State Department in social work. But the interesting thing, when she left Richmond, she went to New York and was in charge of the—at that time we were the ULCA, the United Lutheran Church in America—but in charge of the refugee program for bringing the people that were displaced by World War II, doing what could be done to see that they did get attention and were brought here and placed in responsible homes and so forth. She worked with them for some years and had just started something else when the Hungarian uprising came, so she went right back to it to help for a shorter length of time, since that was not the five - or six-year onslaught that World War II had been. But she did that, and then was with an agency that worked with accrediting social work programs country -wide,—graduate programs. But then the really fascinating thing that she did was go as a Peace Corps volunteer to Western Samoa when she was in her seventies.

When Belenky et al. (1997) studied successful women's organizations, they found leaders who instead of adopting patriarchal models of leadership embraced nurture and care, traditional women's ethics, in their roles as leaders. If, as second-wave feminists have insisted, the personal is political, the everyday choices of women such as those who came to carry out the mission work in the mountains "had political import—that is, the daily minute interactions of [their] lives *mattered*, not just for each of [them] alone but potentially for everyone, for the world" (Hochman, 1994). The leadership of the women associated with KTS tried to integrate the public and private, to teach students that even the small things they did mattered. Peggie Baldwin said,

That was always preached. Mother Deal always said, 'You must go out there and must be constructive.' And this was taught very strongly, that we must go and make a difference in the world. And that must have sunk way down deep, because I always thought somewhere along the way, you have be constructive and make a difference in your life and somebody else's life, too.



FIGURE 23: PRINCIPAL MILDRED H. "MAMA" DEAL (Private files of LaVerne Kiser)

It is interesting to me that the narrators and other people I have talked to refer to some of the women by titles and their first names. Of course, Sister Sophia Moeller was a Lutheran deaconess, and *Sister* was her proper religious title. However, she is almost always called Sister Sophie, not Sister Moeller, or even Sister Sophia. Other women are referred to as Miss 'Trina or Miss Katrina, Miss Betty and Miss Ida. Belenky et al. (1997) discuss a tradition within Black culture of using the title Sister with a name, indicating respect for the woman's leadership within the community. In the mountains where I grew up, Aunt was the title often used to indicate the same level of respect for a woman. The use of names like Sister Sophie and Miss 'Trina point toward the respect those who knew them had for the women at KTS. Others who recognized the support and encouragement for individuals, the nurturing of the entire community these leaders supplied, spoke of their contributions quietly. The work of Miss Ida and Miss Betty and others may not have been seen as traditional "leadership" because of the masculine connotations of control that are associated with the word. Instead, this leadership was built upon "values, metaphors, and activities associated with maternal thinking and maternal practices" (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 17). KTS is part of the tradition of a "women's culture" that has been revealed through feminist inquiry, a culture that has subverted the patriarchal model of leadership by women working with one another to influence social behavior and the course of their own lives (Baron, 1991, p. 12).

Not only did the women who came to KTS as teachers and nurses exhibit their own leadership, but they also nurtured leadership skills in the students in small and large ways. Each morning, students gathered for chapel before beginning the school day. Sometimes, one of the women teachers would direct the short devotional meeting, but more often, it was the students themselves who lead.

A lot of times, we'd take turns, even me, and I was so shy. Later after I was over there for a while I [was leader] sometimes in the morning in the chapel. The girls and the teachers would have the devotions in the morning. (Geneva Shepherd)

Involving students in such leadership roles sent the messages that women had the right and the ability to make their voices heard in church, and that everyone's voice was important. While some religious traditions frowned upon women praying in public or speaking in church, girls at KTS were also called upon to have nightly prayers or to pray the blessing before meals.

And we always had the blessing, which was new to me, before we ate, and sometimes they'd call on different people, and scare you to death when they called on you to say the blessing, but you just said [whatever you felt]. (Geneva Shepherd)

Actions such as these where students were given significant responsibility in the community were important because “when women's leadership is supported, whole communities begin to thrive in ways that are not seen with modes of leadership that emphasize more hierarchical forms of decision making” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 10).

The school developed the leadership potential of its students in other ways as well. A number of Bible School teachers from throughout the United States volunteered their services during the summer; however, the remarkable scale the schools achieved would not have been possible without the efforts of KTS students. In 1937, 1330 people attended the 23 Bible Schools of the Southern Mountain Mission (“Summer,” 1937). Eighteen volunteers came from several states and stayed for various lengths of time. The remainder of the staffing consisted of KTS faculty, local ministers, a few local volunteers, and fifteen KTS students who had been trained for the work. In May of that

year, a two-week “demonstration Bible School” was held at KTS in the morning with adult teachers and student aides and observers. The fifteen students then attended afternoon teacher-training classes where they discussed methods and materials so they would be prepared to lead classes on their own during the summer (“Summer,” 1937). This emphasis on training and responsibility reinforced for the students the importance of the work, the significant role they had in the mission, and their confidence in their own abilities, all of which are necessary if one is to assume a position of leadership.

Students were often trusted with enormous responsibilities. While still in high school, Betty Reedy assumed the duties of the cook for part of the summer.

One summer, I went and cooked two weeks in place of Mrs. Williams because she was sick and couldn't do it, and Mrs. Deal came over and asked my mother if I could go. And Mom said, “Well, do you think she can do that?” And Mrs. Deal said, “I know she can.” So I was the cook, which was kind of a treat— when the other girls had to go and pick berries, I had to go rest a while because I prepared lunch and then dinner. But I did it all; I ordered the food and prepared the meals and did the cooking for two weeks. That was an extra two weeks because this came about after I'd already done my two weeks. And I don't remember, probably they paid me; I don't know if they gave me credit on my tuition, but they probably did.

An emphasis on leadership was part of the Konnarock mission from the beginning. In the first pamphlet publicizing the work, this goal was clear:

The purpose of the school is not primarily to supplement the State's educational program which, it must be acknowledged, is inadequate in the backward districts, not to educate a few promising children for positions outside their own communities, but to give adequate home and Christian training to children who may in turn be leaders in their own mountain districts (Morehead, n.d.).

Each senior at KTS was enrolled in a special class called Leadership Training, the purpose of which was to empower the student to go into her own community and church and assume leadership roles. Many graduates of KTS went on to further training. A 1955

pamphlet reports that “in the past few years more than fifty percent of the Konnarock Lutheran School graduates have gone on to colleges and other training schools” (“Facts”). The percentage figures are not available for earlier years, and were probably not as high, but informal reports found in the Synod archives indicate that a number of students did further their education after high school. A paper dated 1937 concerning KTS alumnae lists information about the women’s subsequent training. Included on the list are the following notations by the former students’ names:

Lutheran Bible Institute Minneapolis, 1932-33

Marion Junior College 1933-34

Nurses’ training, Rockland Street Hospital, Orangeburgh, New York

Graduated Montefiore Hospital

Graduated Lynchburg Hospital

Two years with Prof. And Mrs. Robert Carroll, night school and extension work

Has just entered Harrisonburg State Teachers College, VA

Now doing third year at Berea College, Berea, KY

Appalachian State Teachers College

Hopes to enter Lankenau Hospital next term (Archives Virginia Synod)

When these women developed leadership skills and a sense of their own worth, they were essentially rewriting theology, transforming the way they talked about God. At this time, the women at KTS may have never used feminine pronouns for the deity or have spoken of God our Mother, but they were reaching new understandings of how God works through all people to bring about change. If women begin to think about God through the lens of their own experience, they are able to see “a different vision of community ...characterized by relationships of mutuality and reciprocity, of love and justice” (Johnson, 1998, p. 6). Women doing theology is not for women alone, but for all people, altering their relationships with one another and with all creation (Johnson, 1998).

Much of Peggie Baldwin’s own story focused on her work involving the restoration of the school building; her present is tied closely to her past. Honig (1997)

believes that not only do specific experiences shape individuals' lives, but that these experiences may also modify the individuals' own understanding of their pasts. Her assertion is that "any oral history must be read with an eye to how the personal and historical moment in which it is told invariably shapes its content" (Honig, 1997, ¶13). Had Peggie or the other narrators told their stories at a different time in their lives, the stories may have had a different focus. Peggie sees the work of restoring the building as a way to both preserve her past and contribute something to the future.

I just feel that there were so many good people that were sent there; teachers and ministers that came into that area that gave us much more than we could ever give back. So that's why we're going to try to give back. We can give back a part of that history that had gone on in that happy place, and I feel that we can and we should save it. We should put our history back in there. I have wanted that.

(Peggie Baldwin)

Looking Toward the Future: An Eschatological Focus

Shakespeare had a sister, but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young—alas, she never wrote a word. Now my belief is that this poet...still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. The opportunity... is now coming within your power to give her.... The opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she may find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while. Virginia Woolf

'Hitch your wagon to a star' is our motto, but we are willing to come to it by degrees.

Catherine Cox Umbarger, KTS principal

The nature of education is such that it looks to the future. The tendency of schools today is to count their products and number their achievements—to view students as subjects to be acted upon and tested and to judge the quality of the school in statistical terms. Yet ask a teacher what the rewards of teaching are. She is not likely to say, “93.2 percent of my students passed the standardized end of course test.” He will not tell you that there is a .815 percent dropout rate in the school system. Instead, the teacher will tell you of individual students who have turned their lives around, of particular students who have left the teacher far behind and gone on to know and do more than the teacher ever will, or of that student who returns years after she was in the classroom and says, “Thank you for teaching me. You made a difference in my life.” Sometimes we teachers are privileged to see some of the transformations we help to bring about, but more often, we do not. The rewards of the classroom are frequently planted in the present, but often do not bear fruit until a future time. Education involves working as diligently as one can to bring about change for the better right now, but also trusting that once there is even a minor crack in the wall of ignorance, intolerance, and injustice, the wall begins the process of crumbling. This was the case at KTS. There were many times when teachers saw remarkable transformations in attitudes, behaviors, and learning among their students. Each small success meant there was the possibility of even greater successes.

The stated purpose of KTS was to bring “education, an improved quality of life, the opportunity for spiritual growth and a better future for the children and adults living in mountain isolation in the Southern Appalachian mountains.” The students of KTS took what they learned at school back with them to their homes and their communities where they could influence those around them. But this, too, is a slow process. In the struggle against the oppressions of poverty, lack of education, exploitation, and sexism—all of which are interrelated—the women at KTS were working toward the future when *all* people could live in a more just world. When one lives in a repressive society, the values of that society are internalized and are not easy to name. The “way things are” affects one’s worldview until he or she does not see the oppression. Therefore, progress against these subtle tyrannies takes time. Be that as it may, “when a feminist theorist makes normative claims about things such as human nature and the character of

justice...one can be certain that her argument holds a vision of a better, possible future” (Jones, 2002, p. 9). Identified by Jones (2000) as feminism’s “pragmatic eschatological orientation,” this element of feminism is evident in the work of KTS as it struggled to make life better for its students and the community in which it existed, but trusted that what it did today would bring even greater growth in the future.

Each of the narrators in this study found a way to touch the future: they are mothers, teachers, church leaders, and community activists. Their lives continue to make a difference and to pass on the legacy of KTSs. Principal Betty Deck wrote of the goal of the school to impact the future through the leadership of its students.

At Konnarock Training School we have tried a well-rounded program, to make our students alive mentally, physically, and most of all spiritually, so that when they go out into the community they can exert an influence. ...Not only do we hope that our graduates will exert a spiritual influence in these mountains, but also that they, through their own homes, will have an influence on the physical and economic conditions. ...May our present students, as many of our past students, go out into the community as Christian leaders and through their attitudes and activities shed abroad their influence and light. (Deck, 1946, p. 12)

Estelle Freedman (1995) argues that the reason the feminist movement lost momentum after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment was that women held “the naïve hope of becoming men’s equals overnight” (p. 88). Centuries of patriarchy cannot be overthrown in one person’s lifetime, yet the small acts of one person can expand the extent to which another is able act more freely (Hochman, 1994). Women who were part of KTS wanted to bring about and to be a part of change for themselves and for others.

A predilection for the future sometimes leads feminists to ... overestimate what can be accomplished in the present, ...[and they] may seem naïve about the limits of historical transformation.... [F]eminists lift up the already/not-yet character of their hope, a hope both exuberant and humble. This hope’s exuberance lies in the belief that feminist ideals have the power to change the present by shaping our

beliefs, actions, and attitudes, and hence, our institutions and cultural worlds.
(Jones, 2000)

Principal Helen Dyer's (1934) words echo these sentiments:

Can you wonder, then, that we all acknowledge that there are untouched areas within our fields? Can you wonder that we stress working with and through the community and its people instead of taking the seemingly quicker and less complicated way? Increasingly emphatic our local message has been: "Prepare YE the way of the Lord." Can you wonder that we rejoice when others begin or take over projects for which we have long seen the opportunity or felt the need, but which we were not able to do adequately ourselves? [Other workers] are making a try for a better economic foundation, a better "living", for at least some of the future families of these mountains?

The time seems to be ready for those of our Church who will ...patiently work to help correlate and expand existing and future activities into a more abundant life for all. (pp. 4-5, original punctuation and stress).

Feminist theology is an active process, a doing, not being satisfied with the vision of a future paradise, but striving in the here and now to bring into being the prayer petition "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

The new insight that women have brought to the [theological] debate is the realization that liberation is not a once and for all achievement. It is not so much a final destination as a journey with a variety of stations along the way. (Isherwood, 2002, p.43)

The value of an experiment like KTS was that it offered not only a theory of moral behavior in an ideal society, but it also gave direction in how to meet the very real problems of the flawed world in which it existed. Moral theories "must be made to confront lived reality; they must be found satisfactory in the actual situations people find themselves in" (Held, 1993, p.23).

I think [Konnarock Training School] is something that definitely has affected the community. A lot of students have come out of these hollows, as well as the ones that have come in from Boone and Attoway and so forth. And anybody that stayed long enough, has been influenced by it in one way or another. (Emily Umbarger)