

~ Cruising For Connections ~

**Women go to sea
for 3 days of networking
without men**

by MARGARET BERNSTEIN - Everywoman Editor
THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

MIAMI - Apprehensively, I stepped into the registration area. I had just boarded an ocean liner for The Possible Woman[®] Cruise, a seminar-at-sea for executive women, and expected to have to introduce myself to clusters of women in suits and heels chatting over champagne.

But when I found the well-heeled group I was seeking, it looked more like a well-oiled bucket brigade. Women were coming to the aid of Linda Wind, organizer of this first-time cruise; a copy shop disaster had left her with thousands of pages of registration information that needed to be stuffed into binders.

Not a problem. Upon hearing the story, every registrant quickly rolled up her sleeves and joined the assembly line.

I couldn't help but smile as I took a seat and did the same. Here was a roomful of entrepreneurs and corporate executives not above sorting and collating; most, I suspect had been intimate with such clerical duties in previous lives.

We got the job done quickly, all the while laughing and getting to know each other. "Be in a total state of frenzy when people walk in; it's a great icebreaker," said Rosemary Downing, a Pepper Pike sales manager for the Carlisle clothing collection who was there to present workshops on dressing for success.

A blast, and away

And then with a blast of the ship's horn, we left the Miami pier, gliding into a balmy January afternoon and suddenly dependent on a ship-to-shore operator if we wanted to check up on the world we had left behind.

It was the only vacation Betty L. Siegel, president of Georgia's Kennesaw State University, can remember where she didn't call her office once - a fact she found astonishing but comforting. "There ought to be some time in your life when you can take off a few days for self-growth, direction and affirmation" she said. "We ought to be smart enough and assured of our team's efforts back home."

Wind Water Wisdom and Women



Keynote Speakers: (left to right) Barbara Pagano, President Executive Pathways; Dr. Marjorie Barlow, author, consultant and marriage and family therapist; Linda Wind, cruise organizer; Connie Glaser, nationally acclaimed author; Dr. Betty L. Siegel, President of Kennesaw State University and 1997 Georgia Woman of the Year.



During the next Possible Woman Conference, the Royal Caribbean's Sovereign of the Seas will be a floating classroom for female executives and entrepreneurs attending The 1999 Possible Woman[®] Cruise. January 15-18. Call Linda Wind for details.



Danielle Turcola of Twinsburg, Ohio who read about The Possible Woman[®] Cruise in the Everywoman section, is glad she went. She was hired on the spot by another attendee to do companywide training, and later signed up two more cruise-goers as clients: "I was expecting to make contacts, but I was not expecting this response."



Linda Wind, cruise organizer. "The Possible Woman[®] Leadership Conference at Sea is brought to you by Wind Enterprises[®] Inc., of Atlanta. The company was founded by Linda Wind to promote synergy and self-empowerment among business and professional women and career mothers. She has been successfully promoting women's issues via "The Possible Woman[®]" seminars, weekend retreats, customized training sessions and both individual and corporate staff development programs since 1985. Check website for details: www.possiblewoman.com.

That sense of complete detachment was the reason Wind decided to put the event on a ship. "There are no phones, no fax machines. A three-day cruise is relatively short, but basically you have a cloistered environment unless someone chooses to jump ship," explained Wind, a promoter of women's seminars and corporate staff development programs. "It really gives women the opportunity to connect, instead of being driven by the external forces that impact our lives from 9 to 5."

Our Bahamas-bound ship was the Leeward of Norwegian Cruise Lines, where we had an agenda separate from regular cruise-goers. As folks in T-shirts and flip-flops did the macarena around the pool below, we met for a private orientation - 135 women from 14 states who had heard about the women-only event and decided to see what it was all about.

Networking

As it turned out, it was about networking. In a big way. The Jan. 9-12 trip, dubbed the "the schmooze cruise" by the Chicago Tribune, delivered an envi-

ronment where you could pass your business card unabashedly. Before we would dock again in Miami, lasting contacts had been made and at least one deal had been closed.

Echoing through the daily keynote speeches, the workshops and even mealtime conversations was the same theme: women helping women.

Keynote speakers offered earthy advice on getting ahead in the workplace. Barbara L. Pagano, president of an Atlanta-based company specializing in leadership and team development, urged the women to ask a co-worker to give them a critical once-over on their appearance and mannerisms. Women have been conditioned to be "good girls" at work, but don't be too eager to please, advised Pagano. Barbara travels all over the world as a business consultant to Fortune 500 Companies.

Keynote Connie Glaser, nationally acclaimed author of *Swim With The Dolphins - a Time Warner Book*, told the story of a woman who had the unfortunate habit of nodding enthusiastically during conversations. But once she was made aware of it, she was determined to stop. Soon she was called in for a meeting with a potential employer, so she practiced talking-without expression. In the meeting she was offered \$120,000. She fought the urge to smile delightedly, and kept her silence.

Seconds passed.

Finally, Glaser said, the other guy blinked: "OK, \$150,000 and not a penny more," he told her.

Complete Package

Wind said it was important to have experts like Pagano and Glaser on hand to address not just professional development but women's mental, physical and spiritual well-being as well. Sessions included using intuition as a decision-making tool, holistic health and Tai Chi.

But more effective than any here's-how-you-do-it lecture was the chance to see the best of the best, in action. Siegel, who was the 1997 Georgia Woman of the Year, delivered a keynote speech that had women lined up afterward to thank and hug. (One woman declared to her, "I'm in love.")

Speaking without notes and introducing herself as a coal miner's daughter who grew up in Kentucky "back when the

earth was cooling," Siegel gave a riveting talk punctuated with colorful stories.

She recalled a trip to California where she saw a majestic forest of sequoias trees and wondered aloud if the roots reached all the way to China. Oh, no, said her guide, sequoias actually have very shallow roots with those of its neighbors, creating a sturdy underground network. "That's why you never see a solitary sequoia," Siegel said, urging her audience of women to emulate the trees' example and "come together to empower each other so that all can stand tall."

Remembering others

Another powerful moment came when national author and marriage and family therapist Marjorie Barlow of Corpus Christi, Texas, urged the audience to not forget the women upon whose shoulders they were standing. She led the audience on an inner journey, asking them to close their eyes and slowly walk backward:

"Stand, and climb back into your mother," she instructed. "Now contemplate your mother's mother. Who was she? Could she vote? Think about how they described that woman, and does that describe you? What did she give you? What did she set in motion for you? Own that heritage."

Many in the audience were moved to tears.

The inspirational words from cruise speakers resounded like an alarm clock for Angie Bryant, 32, of Nashville, Tenn., who found herself waking up early on the final morning of the cruise to put her career goals down on paper. "This has really changed my life. I have the plan now for what's next," said Bryant, office administrator for the Center for Quality and Professional Development at Belmont University, which paid for her cruise.

"It's synergy," she said. "This connectedness, the networking, the sisterhood - there are so many women I can call now. I have resources."

Many of the attendees on the cruise, which cost from \$674 to \$724, were from the Atlanta area, where Wind lives. But when Danielle Turcola of Twinsburg, Ohio, read a notice about the cruise in the Everywoman section, she decided to take a chance and go.

She is grateful she did. Turcola, who

offers training in grooming, appropriate attire, conduct and dining and global etiquette, was hired on the spot by another attendee to do companywide training. "I have three new clients from the cruise," she marveled. "I was expecting to make contacts, but I was not expecting this response."

No men, no venting

Every Possible Woman® participant either came solo, as Turcola did, or with a group of women, said Wind. There was not one husband or boyfriend along for the ride.

It was a golden opportunity to male-bash, but Turcola said she was struck by the fact that she didn't hear any. "This was not an event to come and vent. I didn't hear any horror stories, women didn't tell me they were stuck in the glass ceiling. These were women who were determined to make it."

And now, four months after the cruise, stories of contacts made and new clients acquired continue to flow. My favorite comes from the Atlanta Cruise reunion party, where one cruise-goer brought along a friend who struck up a conversation with the friend of another cruise-goer. Pretty soon the two were networking as hard as anyone else in the room. A few weeks later, one had hired the other as a consultant.

So for Wind, it's full speed ahead to next year's cruise. With cosmetics magnate Flori Roberts and motivational speaker Diana Nightingale already booked as speakers, Wind promises the 1999 cruise will be bigger and better.

Wind is hopeful that attendance will at least double: "Virtually everyone (from the 1998 cruise) said they were going to come (back) and bring somebody with them," she said.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

The next Possible Woman® Cruise is scheduled for Jan. 15-18, 1999. Guests will depart from Miami aboard Royal Caribbean's *Sovereign of the Sea*, and cruise to Nassau and a private island. Among the workshop topics: "Decathlon Leadership," "Ways Woman Lead," "Global and Business Etiquette," "Unleashing Your Creative Possibilities," "Speaking Your Mind: The Art of Persuasion" and "The Financially Wise Woman for the New Millennium...or, How to Avoid Cat Food When You Retire." Cost ranges from \$697 to \$982 and includes room, seminars, food and gratuities. Air transportation not included.

Call 1.888.663.4767 or 770.663.4767

Or check the Web site

www.possiblewoman.com