

Point of View

HAVING IT ALL

by Peggy Layne

There is a lot of talk these days about women trying to "have it all." The term "superwoman" is out of fashion, but we still juggle the competing demands of career, family, community, and personal life. In spite of heroic efforts to plan, coordinate, schedule, and manage the various aspects of our lives, we've all experienced moments when something slips out of place. The subsequent chain reaction can result in missed deadlines, frazzled nerves, and general frustration. Sometimes a sense of humor is all that keeps us going!

Women engineers have made a commitment to pursue a challenging career in an environment that is not always supportive. The results of SWE's survey of women and men engineers indicate that the challenge of engineering is one of the reasons that we chose it as a career. Whether in designing a piece of equipment, developing software, supervising construction, or managing a project, success in engineering requires dedication and effort. Much personal satisfaction is derived from facing and overcoming those challenges.

Family responsibilities come in many forms, from developing a supportive relationship with a significant other to raising children and caring for aging parents. At certain times in our lives, these commitments may be our highest priority. Other demands may have to be put aside for a while for these relationships. While it may be hard to remember during a 2 a.m. feeding or in the midst of a disagreement with your partner, the rewards of family life are like no other.

Many of us also enjoy participation in community and professional activities, including churches, civic organizations, political groups, and the arts, as well as SWE and possibly a technical society. These endeavors enable us to meet a variety of people, learn

new skills, and make a contribution to the community.

The weeks leading up to SWE's annual National Convention and Student Conference are especially hectic for anyone involved in planning for this event. We find ourselves burning the midnight oil as we race to complete preparation for technical presentations, professional development programs, and Society business. Meanwhile, our normal commitments to job and family continue. Understanding bosses, colleagues and spouses make the difference between total chaos and our normally hectic lives.

Why do we take as much as a week out of our summer to spend time with 1000 other women who are just as harried as we are? How else would we find out how other women deal with the challenges in

their lives, share their frustrations, learn from their disappointments, and celebrate their successes? Where else would we have the opportunity to meet women like Dr. Elsa Reichmanis, this year's Achievement Award recipient, Mary Jones, the Upward Mobility Award recipient, and Resnik Challenger Medal recipient Yvonne Brill? Participation in SWE activities is worth the effort for the chance to find out how other women are dealing with their attempts to have it all!

Peggy Layne is a senior project manager with ABB Environmental Services in Tallahassee, Florida, responsible for hazardous waste site investigations at Navy facilities in the southeast. She served as FY93 secretary for the Society and is the statistics chair for FY94.

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