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MECKLENBURG- FROM PRE-MED TO THE PRO BOWL

This 12th round draft choice took all the experts by surprise. But the best is yet to come.

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KARL MECKLENBURG



A COUNSELOR IN OLDEST WAR

'Yuppie' therapist Carolyn Bushong and her Wimps, Outlaws and "whiny little wifelets."

A black cat gulps his food, then greedily eyes the female's dish next to his. The female is only halfway through her dinner, and the male intends to chase her away then gobble her food, as usual. This time, though, a slender foot in a high heel stands between the cat and his objective. The cat calculates, then goes for the food. "Don't you dare!" warns Carolyn Bushong as she stamps the floor in front of his face. Startled, the cat backs off; the female finishes her meal in peace.

The battle between the sexes knows no bounds. People, cats — who knows, maybe worker ants grumble and plot while they tote their queens around. But if there's any such thing as an expert on the fray, Bushong qualifies. She's a psychotherapist who observes, chronicles and counsels people in her specialty — relationships.

"I feel like a little wise old lady," she says. "Like I'm about 65 in the things I know."

Wizened on the inside, perhaps, outwardly Bushong is a vivacious 38-year-old with an incendiary quality that goes beyond her strawberry blond hair and which, like a campfire, attracts people. A performer at heart, one of her goals is to be a regular on the talk-show circuit. Bushong has a tendency to knock down goals as if they were tenpins; she's been a guest on local TV and national radio.

Another goal is to make \$100,000 a year by the time she's 40. Like most wars, the battle between the sexes is good for the economy; Bushong earns five times what she made four years ago.

"I'm proud to be a yuppie," she states. Bushong's passion for relationships was born watching her parents battle. Her mom was a hairdresser and her dad

drove a truck in Mount Vernon, Ill.

After getting a bachelor's, a master's, married and divorced, Bushong committed job suicide when she quit as a school psychologist in the middle of the school year and "signed up to be a ski bum." Destination: Aspen.

Two years later, she taught an assertiveness class for women at nearby Colorado Mountain College. The experience persuaded Bushong to dust off her skills as a therapist.

Her practice evolved from women to include couples and men — the doctors, lawyers and corporate chiefs who'd made their money but lost their way in the no man's land of personal relationships. Bushong describes her therapy as much

more confrontational than traditional. A key is getting her clients in touch with any anger they felt as children toward their parents; after much rehearsing, they must confront their parents with that life-long anger.

Writing is Bushong's self-therapy. She characterizes the battle between the sexes in her syndicated articles where Sugar Mamas, New Macho Women and Cinderellas joust with Wimps, Outlaws and Peter Pans. Full of fun and insights, her articles, published in magazines and newspapers nationwide, range from *When a Woman Cries at Work* to *Men Face No-Win Situation*, and are sprinkled with phrases like "whiny little wifelet" and "keeping a man as a pet."

Men are "real confused," Bushong says. "They don't have any idea what to do with us." Women are "winning the battle and losing the war." Intimacy is the casualty. As men and women become more androgynous, learning about their masculine and feminine aspects, they'll better understand each other's perspectives.

"I don't get tired, I get hyper," Bushong says, although she periodically cries "Halt!" and hides away in her Evergreen home for some solitude and reflection on the human heart.

"My life is set up just the way I want it right now," she says, sounding "Single, Secure and Satisfied" — a seminar she gives at Denver Free University. Not eager for another marriage, she still sees hope for the institution and doesn't believe marital necessity means martial. Ultimately, though, Bushong believes, "You do have to be on guard."

Her parents, after 39 years of turbulence, divorced in November. But her mom recently moved back in, without remarrying, and, "The whole town is talking." Her mom is the woman who — when Bushong wanted to change her married name, Doty, but didn't want her maiden name, Nordin, so took her mom's maiden name, Bushong — said, "Oh no! Everybody will think you're illegitimate!" But, Bushong says, it just might work out for her parents this time.

After all, her cats are getting along fine.



Carolyn Bushong

Kris Robbins, a Denver free-lancer, writes this personality profile each month for DENVER MAGAZINE.