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Editorial; Joint Annual Meeting: Focus on the Future

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The American education system is often criticized as being inferior to those of many other countries. In our primary and secondary schools, we are said to lack rigor in teaching math and language skills. Yet eight of the ten highest rated universities in the world are located in this country and foreign students flock to our shores to obtain higher education. We have the best doctoral programs in the world.

Many countries teach by the "rote", or memorization method. This generally enables students to perform very well on standardized tests. Unfortunately, it also squelches creativity at an early age, which is mandatory for doctoral studies.

I have visited many schools in Europe and what I noticed most was their lack of flexibility. There is no room in their systems for "late bloomers." At a very early age, children are segregated into either vocational or university tracks. Although higher education is generally free, it is only available to the academically gifted who are motivated to work hard from childhood. I couldn't help but wonder how many of us would have been excluded from ever entering an exciting and challenging career such as accounting.

I didn't decide until I was "thirtysomething" what I wanted to be when I grew up. At "fortysomething", I'm starting to explore other options. By the time that I am

"fiftysomething", I think that I would like to be either a best-selling novelist or a lottery winner. (A friend told me that those were fantasies rather than goals.) The point is that I did not establish my career plans and goals during childhood and I believe that I am more the norm than the exception in this country.

Many of my students are women well into their thirties (some in their forties) who have decided to return to the work force after rearing children. I teach at an urban university where the average of our students is 27. They bring a richness and cultural diversity to the classroom that would be lacking with only traditionally aged students. Our businesses have begun to recognize that mature graduates have much to offer clients and customers. In other countries, alternative career options are closed at a very early age.

It's true that we need to continually work to improve our education system, but we have a sound structure that allows us to grow and explore our potential at any age. For that, we can be grateful.

Betty Brown

Joint Annual Meeting

The 1991 Joint Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 12-14, 1991 at the Westin Hotel on Chicago's Magnificent Mile. The Meeting has been designed to help you take a strategic view of the rapidly changing business environment and seize the opportunities of the future.

Featured speakers include:

- Edward D. Barlow, Jr., of Barlow Associates, Inc. and nationally known futurist;
- Cheryl Wilson, Partner in Charge of Coopers & Lybrand's Emerging Business Services in Chicago and Chairman of Strategic Planning Committee of the Illinois CPA Society;
- Sam Vitkowski, National Director of Recruiting for BDO Seidman and Chairman of the AICPA Committee on the Upward Mobility of Women in the Accounting Profession; and
- Marilyn Moats Kennedy, acclaimed au-

thor and consultant on career strategies.

Technical sessions include a program at the Chicago Board of Trade on the futures industry, a practice management

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session for sole practitioners and a host of other presentations showcasing future accounting and management issues. In all, you will be able to earn up to 20 hours

of CPE and have an excellent opportunity to meet other women professionals, compare notes, generate ideas and exchange solutions.

The city of Chicago is a major attraction in itself and offers a wide range of activities for you and your family. A Welcome to Chicago reception is scheduled for Wednesday evening, September 11, but we hope you will plan to arrive earlier. The Hospitality Committee will be in full swing starting Sunday, September 8, to offer information on tours, restaurants and city sites as well as activities for your spouse, children and guests.

Registration brochures with more information on the Annual Meeting, including the availability of child care and a roommate matching service, will be mailed in July. But *Focus on the Future* now —mark your calendar and plan to join us in Chicago in September.