

Options are key to success

Emily Taylor urges women to make choices

By TIM HOYT,
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Emily Taylor remembers being at a meeting in Washington D.C. when a Russian woman, a cosmonaut, asked the American women present what they considered the key concept of the women's movement in the United States.

"About a dozen women said 'choice,'" Mrs. Taylor recalled. "They said women can stay home, they can work or they can do both."

"I think I was the only one who raised a question," she said. "There are too many circumstances to prevent choice."

Mrs. Taylor, who was Kansas University's dean of women from 1956 to 1974, was the keynote speaker at "Choices and Challenges for Women," a conference held Saturday in the Kansas Union. The conference was sponsored by the Emily Taylor Woman's Resource Center, which Mrs. Taylor helped create.

MRS. TAYLOR said the word 'choice' is often misunderstood. She began her address by talking about women who have so-called options forced upon them. Such options are those women choose when they find themselves alone because of a husband's death, divorce or desertion.

"She can't choose that it's what's best, to stay with the kids or a career," she said. "Sometimes we really do choose, sometimes choices are forced upon us."

However, Mrs. Taylor, who spoke to about 50 women attending the day-long conference, said she wanted to emphasize the ways women can expand their range of choice in life. She said the college-age woman of today has the greatest number of options of all time.

"A lot of people your grandmother's age are envious and some are resentful," she said.

"I'm only a little envious and not resentful. But I am fearful of your generation bringing the progress toward choice to a standstill."

MRS. TAYLOR said that progress can't be made without intervention, such as new laws and



(Staff photo by Ben Bigler)

Emily Taylor, who was dean of women at Kansas University from 1956 to 1974, says women should increase their options. Mrs. Taylor was keynote speaker at "Choices and Challenges for Women," a conference held Saturday at KU.

court rulings.

Improvements in the treatment of women, which Mrs. Taylor said occurred during the time when most of the audience was growing up, came about because of such intervention, she continued.

Mrs. Taylor said that few people thought sex discrimination existed in the early 1970s, while today such prejudice is acknowledged on nearly every college campus in the country. She credited legislation banning sex discrimination for this progress.

Mrs. Taylor remembered when women from KU applied for admission into the Kansas State School of Veterinary Medicine, only to go before a board that questioned their reasons for wanting to work with animals.

"Many times, they came back in tears," she said.

But today, she said, about half the veterinary students at the school are women.

MRS. TAYLOR pointed to another example of schools that had a quota calling for the admission of "two women, two jews and no blacks." Today such overt discrimination is intolerable, she said.

In addition to improvements that women already have seen, Mrs. Taylor also discussed ways women can improve the number and quality of choices they have.

Among other things, she touched on the need for women to keep abreast of population and demographic trends, and how they will affect women moving out into the work force today.

She said that before the turn of

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the century, half of all workers will be women and one-third of the work force will be of African, Hispanic or Asian descent.

"You have to learn to deal with diversity," she said, and suggested that women begin now to learn about how other people think and feel.

OTHER ADVICE she offered women was to improve skills, which will provide more choices. She also suggested that women set goals for their own lives.

But Mrs. Taylor said she had suggestions that were even more specific for creating additional choices.

She said that women should constantly work to increase the number of contacts they have with other people, even to the point of keeping a card file on each new person they meet.

She also suggested working to find a mentor. But, she warned, "you don't choose a mentor, a mentor chooses you." And she listed specific ways to work to attract someone who wants to work with you, such as attending as many conferences and educational meetings as possible and asking intelligent questions at those gatherings.

She also suggested that students join all the organizations they can.

"And have a sense of humor, but never try humor at the expense of someone else.

"And never attribute anything good that happens to you to luck," she added. "It's a culmination of good choices."