

Ms. SPECIAL ISSUE

1995 GOOD DEEDS & NEWS



Reporting on the Beijing Conference
Women Poets Take Center Stage
Ms. Goes Underground To Expose Sweatshops

MARCIA CLARK BELLA ABZUG
MYRLIE EVERS-WILLIAMS SUSAN SARANDON AUNG SAN SUU KYI

WOMEN OF THE YEAR



47745

PLUS! SHANNON FAULKNER CANDACE GINGRICH AND MORE

THE SAD HISTORY OF THE SOLE-PASTING WOMAN

From when was it, I wonder,
That my days were drowned in bliss and mirth?

I didn't seek a vocation,
Nor was I given a chance to find one;
I was to paste on the soles of sandals.
Yet my palms were not tough enough
To grip the tools that I would be embarrassed by,
I was astounded to find such tough labor
Beyond my ability,
I was frightened
By this vocational disease
That froze my blood.
I licked sandal soles all day long.
The smoke sucked into the small ventilator
Choked me.
I was drowned in glue
And paint thinner.
But my family didn't complain
About my smell, for
I was the breadwinner.

I worked on a commission
Which spurred me on.
I hid pincers within my wedding dress,
Gripped my roller even after marriage.
I continued to work for my children.
Ah, I who came after myself. I, who
Decline has caught up to,
Give my aching body healing,
Me and my many rotten aprons.
Me and the factory eaves
Who compete with each other in decaying.
I, who have lived my life with this glue,
I, dizzy with the smell,
I, at my death at last,
Can go to true Paradise.

—Chuwol Chong

Chuwol Chong is a second-generation Zainichi (Japanese resident of Korean nationality) who lives in Osaka. She is the author of several collections of poetry.