

Renaissance News



Volume 4, No. 9

Vision - Integrity - Quality

September 1990

Daily paper profiles Renaissance & chapter

Almost four months after the initial contact and many interviews, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, this nation's tenth largest daily newspaper, profiled the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of Renaissance.

The article, which ran on the front page of the Daily Magazine section for July 3, was the result of efforts by Ronnie Hammer, director of outreach for the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, Angela Gardner, chapter leader and Paula Sinclair, national director of outreach. Hammer contacted the paper initially to get the chapter listed in the local Neighbors section. The nature of the group intrigued one of the pa-

per's writers and the idea for the article was developed.

Inquirer writer, Kimberly J. McLarin, spent many hours talking with Hammer and other members of Renaissance. She attended the March meeting of the Philadelphia chapter with photographer in tow.

The article was very positive focusing on the supportive environment for transgendered people. Several members were quoted including Hammer, Gardner, Sinclair, Trudi Henri, national managing director, and JoAnn Roberts, national director at-large. Hammer's struggle with crossdressing issues was discussed in some detail giving

the article a very personal note.

The only negative comment about the article was made by a Renaissance member who objected to the writer's identification of speakers with the phrase, "a man who calls himself (feminine name)" None of the speakers quoted objected to this form of identification.

As a result of the newspaper article, Renaissance was contacted by *Evening Magazine*, a syndicated television news magazine. Sinclair is working with *EM* producer Kelly Ryan on a segment featuring Renaissance and its pro-active public education programs. The feature should air in the Fall season.

F-t-M's life recounted in new book

The life of Babe Bean (later Jack Bee Garland) is another amusing oddity in the history of publishing. Babe Bean donned men's clothing early in her career as a writer in order to be taken seriously. Even though she dressed as a man she made no bones about being a woman and as such was given the assignments that were befitting a female writer of her time. In 1897 female writers were doomed to such subject matter as church socials, flower shows, and other leisure activities.

Babe chose to live on a barge as the cost was less than a rented room. In the evenings, she would wander the streets looking for material to write about. Most of the material from her nightly jaunts is similar to "mens" magazines and "penny dreadfuls" of the period.

Her writing took her to unusual places one being a men's asylum. She toured the yards, dormitories, hospital, dining room, and workshop of the patients. At this time, she was the first woman to enter these all-male grounds. Unfortunately, her writings on this subject are brief and rather uninformative about the everyday workings of the asylum. After this she was off to write about the war in the Philippines. She claimed that she enlisted in the army, but no records show that she actually did. An interesting thing about this career move is that she was working for the Hearst Publishing Company and they were well known for peppering their stories with half-truths.

After her tour in the Philippines

continued on page 9

Member competes for Pennsy crown

New Hope was blown away on Aug. 7. The dynamite used was the competition for the first title of Miss Gay Pennsylvania. One of our sisters was in the middle of the explosion of glitter, sequins and hair.

Monika Michaels, a member of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter entered the contest which included segments for sportswear, evening gown and talent.

Michaels was up against formidable competition: Danee Russo, Kara Young, Toni Michaels and seven others. Unfortunately, our Michaels did not place, but she said the event was fun anyway.

Russo won the title and will go on to the Miss Gay America finals in Dallas, Tex., Oct. 16-21.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

New Jersey

South Jersey: Kelly Harris, chapter leader. Write Renaissance SJ, c/o P. O. Box 189, Mays Landing, NJ 08330. Meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Atlantic Mental Health Center, Inc. 2002 Black Horse Pike, McKee, N.J. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Call (609) 641-3782.

Pennsylvania

Greater Philadelphia area: Angela Gardner, chapter leader. Write Renaissance PHL, Box AD, Bensalem, PA 19020. Meets third Saturday of the month in King of Prussia, Pa. Winter hours: starts at 8:00 p.m. Call (215) 946-8887.

Pennsylvania

Reading: Susan Marshall, chapter leader Write Renaissance RDG, Box 14421, Reading, PA 19607. Meets twice a month. There is a dinner-social held at THIS IS IT, 801 Walnut St., Reading, second Wednesday of the month and a membership meeting on the second Saturday. Call (215) 376-8886.

Lower Susquehanna Valley: Elsa Larson, chapter leader Write Renaissance LSV, Box 7412, York, PA 17404. Meets the first Saturday of the month in Camp Hill, Pa. Meeting starts at 8:00 p.m. Call (717) 767-4095.

NATIONAL INFORMATION

✓ Renaissance has a new mailing address, please correct your records: P. O. Box 552, King of Prussia, Pa., 19406.

✓ Renaissance has a new phone number as well. Call (215) 630-1437 24 hours a day for current information about events and activities.

✓ The board of directors has approved a new policy for the development of chapters and affiliates.

— Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance chapter must be incorporated as a non-profit in-

stitution in their home state (except Pa.) before asking for chapter status.

— Any group that wishes to become a Renaissance affiliate will pay a small annual fee for services normally afforded to chapters for free. Affiliates have no legal connection to Renaissance and remain autonomous. Services include unlimited access to reference publications and newsletter copy.

Write for details to Alison Laing, Co-director of Outreach, P. O. Box 552, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406.

AND, DON'T FORGET ABOUT...

• Background Papers are available for \$1 each plus \$.25 postage for each pair ordered. Eight papers are available: 1-Myths & Misconceptions About Crossdressing, 2-Reasons for Male to Female Crossdressing, 3-PARTNERS: Spouses & Significant Others, 4-The Matter of Children, 5-An Annotated Bibliography, 6-Telling the Children: A Transsexual's Point of View, 7-What Is Renaissance?, and 8-AIDS & HIV Safety and Ethics.

• 3R addiction recovery support group meets at King of Prussia on third Sat. of the month.

• The Pen Pal Project. If you are willing to write letters to pen pals, please inform Mary Ann Kirkland or write to the office, c/o Dept. PP.

• A few copies of the Deluxe Edition of Dr. Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* are still available at \$39.95 postpaid. Make checks payable to Renaissance.

Renaissance News

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For current information call (215) 630-1437 24 hrs. a day.

Renaissance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing education and support to the gender community at large.

Events Calendar

September

1st Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
1st Ren LSV Chapter
8th Ren. Reading Chapter
9th Sunday Social @ Woods
15th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter
20-23 CDS Pocono Weekend

October

6th Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
6th Ren LSV Chapter
13th Ren. Reading Chapter
14th Sunday Social @ Woods
20th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter
12-21 Fantasia Fair
Provincetown, Mass.
19-21 Dressing for Pleasure
New York City
31st Henri David's Hallowe'en
Ball at the Bellevue

November

3rd Ren. So. Jersey Chapter
3rd Ren. LSV Chapter
10th Ren. Reading Chapter
11th Sunday Social @ Woods
17th Ren. Gr. Phila. Chapter

S JoAnn Altman Stringer **SURVIVAL**™

THE QUESTION OF SURGERY

One of the more important questions (if not THE most important) any transsexual will ever ponder is whether or not to have sex reassignment surgery. For some of us with iron wills, it isn't even considered a question but an obvious eventuality answered with an "Of course!" But for others uncertain of life and themselves, the operation is indeed a ponderous question with a magnitude of consequences that would rock the Richter scale.

Focusing on the operation itself for a moment, in reality it is only sophisticated plastic surgery. Snip here, tuck there and viola. Really nothing more than what a plastic surgeon might do with a nose or breasts. (Well, maybe a little more.) But the point is that sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) is a physical cosmetic sculpting of body parts. We rationalize SRS by saying that finally our bodies will be the way nature really intended—putting the reasoning somehow on a higher plane. Agreed, the processes in SRS are more involved than in a face lift but the reality is no different. People go to a plastic surgeon to have their facial appearance match their mind's-eye image of themselves. Transsexuals do exactly the same. Wasn't it Dr. Harry Benjamin who shocked the medical establishment by saying it was easier to make the outer physical self concur with the inner self than vice versa?

The major difference between a face lift and SRS, though both are cosmetic answers to inner problems, is that one will superficially make you look better and can be changed if need be, while the other is one that 99 percent of the general public will never see and is irreversible.

A primary question in this whole issue lies in that gray dimension known as "self." How we feel about ourselves plays a big part in how

our lives unfold. An outwardly gregarious person has a lot of self esteem. They like themselves, and it shows on the outside in their appearance and attitude. Conversely, someone who has low self esteem has little outward motivation and is probably perceived by others as shy and withdrawn.

If a person's fuel for low self esteem is due to lack of confidence in their appearance, that is something that can be easily corrected by a plastic surgeon. Professional counselors, and medical doctors many times have noted the difference in a patient's attitude towards themselves and life after having a nose job or breast alteration. Often, after the surgery, they exhibit a new attitude towards life because they feel good about themselves. The removal of the problem causing physical abnormality psychologically allows the patient to function to their full capacity in society. All because their confidence and self esteem has been raised.

Usually, transsexuals suffer a debilitating psychological malfunction that affects every facet of their lives. Unhappy about their bodies and feeling like nothing can help alleviate the problem, confidence drops along with self esteem. They start into a downward spiral of despair and self pity.

In the endless search for some answer, quite often the transsexual will stumble onto some article, television show, etc. dealing with SRS. Immediately they think this is the answer, and finally a light shines at the end of the tunnel. Counseling brings the transsexual's level of self confidence up but then often mires as the therapist is hesitant to recommend the ultimate solution. The patient gets desperate, tries to take measures to sidestep the whole procedure, has surgery and finds afterwards it was the wrong thing for them to do. A nose can be fixed

again. Genitals can't. Forever really means forever.

My point is that SRS is not the nirvana many believe it to be. Surgery, in itself, doesn't solve any problems. It does lighten your purse and makes you walk funny for two or three weeks, but your problems stay after the healing is over. Just because you have the surgery doesn't mean your gender dysphoria will suddenly, magically, be swept away.

Surgery can make a difference in how you feel about yourself, however. No, it's not something you are going to put on public display for everyone to see, "Look what a good job the doctor did." It is a secret between you and your mirror. Unless body-molded pants are your gig, no one will ever be able to tell if you had surgery or not. But if SRS makes you feel better about yourself, more like the person you visualize yourself to be, then maybe it is worth it. For, as explained above, as you feel better about yourself the heightened self-confidence will show on the outside for all to see.

Some people view sex reassignment surgery as an object that gives you a new "thing"; a vagina that's like a trophy for the mantel. If you want SRS just to have a new piece of equipment then you've got it all wrong. If this is you, then you're in this for all the wrong reasons.

For any transsexual, beauty comes from within, not from without. It's got to be the spark inside you, not something a doctor tries to create. Having female/male genitalia doesn't make you a woman/man. The magic in your soul is what tells others around you who you really are. Surgery can build and construct new body parts but it can't ignite that inner flame. If you're pondering the issue of whether or not SRS is right for you, ask yourself this question: Will surgery make me look better in the mirror or will it make me look better on the inside?

Philadelphia Chapter activities for Fall - Winter '90

The ladies of the Greater Philadelphia chapter continue to plan and develop activities for members.

First in the Fall '90 lineup is a return to the New Prelude in New Hope, Pa., with the Prelude IV Party. This special event for all Renaissance members and friends will take place on Sat., Sept. 22, beginning at 7:00 PM. There is a \$5 cover.

Next, is a rumor of a chapter sponsored "hospitality suite" at the Henri David Hallowe'en Party on

Oct. 31 at the Bellevue in Philadelphia. More on that later.

Eschewing the adage, "You can't go home again," the chapter has reserved once more, the Inne at Great Valley for the annual Holiday Party on Sunday evening, Dec. 9. Tickets are \$32 per person. You must purchase your ticket in person or by mail no later than Nov. 9. Tickets will **not** be sold at the door as in previous years.

Angela Gardner, chapter leader,

wants to remind everyone that November is also chapter election time. Anyone interested in participating in chapter management should contact Angela as soon as possible. All chapter offices are up for grabs; Chapter Leader, Treasurer, Membership, Secretary and Outreach. For more information about any of the above activities, call the chapter phone or write to the chapter post box. (See page 2 for address and telephone details.)

MCSM Transgender Issues Workgroup looking for new members


The Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities sponsors a number of workgroups, one of which is the Transgender Issues Workgroup.

Recently seated commissioner, Paul Hanson (Paula Jordan Sinclair) is the chair of the workgroup. Hanson said, "...two commissioners have expressed an interest in

working with us. This... means that transgendered persons can really work toward ending discrimination and building bridges to other sexual minorities. The workgroup is the best way to achieve these goals."

Membership in the workgroup is open to all transgendered people. Transgendered people of color and

female-to-male transsexuals and transvestites are particularly welcomed. It is **not** required to be a resident of the city to participate in the workgroup. Interested parties should contact Peg Conway, MCSM executive director, at (215) 686-1545 or 1220 Sansom St., 10th fl., Philadelphia, PA 19107.



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THE **NEWSQUEEN**™ *Paula Jordan Sinclair*

Here is the biggest gender story of the month: "The mystery of what makes a man a man may never be solved, but scientists now think they know what makes a male masculine." That marvelously naive sentence was how *The New York Times* lead off its report on the discovery of a gene on the human Y chromosome that scientists believe may act as a trigger to transform a growing human fetus that would otherwise become a girl into a baby boy.

Scientists have known for some time that during the seventh week of pregnancy fetuses with XY chromosomes are doped up with biochemicals that change the fetus's physical development from a female track to male. That's right, all males were at one time females - at least physically - in their mother's womb. What was missing from the body of knowledge about human development was the genetic trigger that prompted this natural sex change.

Some scientists are not certain that the gene identified by researchers in London at the MRC National Institute for Medical Research and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund is the correct gene or if it acts alone. But other scientists have hailed the possible discovery as an important clue in understanding the mystery of human development. Strangely, they say the discovery of the gene will have no impact on understanding the psychological or physical sex problems of adults because the gene only does its job once during the earliest fetal development.



From The Netherlands comes news of another medical discovery. A physician in the Dutch city of Groningen reports that a heterosexual, married patient came to him asking that his nipples be made more sensitive for sexual activity.

Following a thorough physical and psychological workup, skeptical doctors found no abnormality or

indication of transsexualism, but they started the man on a daily dose of 0.150 mg of ethinylestradiol. In less than a year, his breasts became "moderately enlarged" and the nipples highly sensitive. During treatment he lost sexual desire, but it returned after treatment was stopped. Even a year after hormone therapy ended, the man reported that nipple stimulation still produced erections and ejaculations.

The report appears in the most recent issue of the scholarly journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.



Another publication — hardly a scholarly journal — reports that singer Kenny Rogers is growing unwelcome breasts.

According to the supermarket tabloid *The Star*, Rogers' breast development is a result of liposuction gone awry. "About 6 to 8 percent of women get fuller breasts after liposuction," said Dr. Norman Martin, the physician who sucked fat from Rogers on one of three occasions. Martin explained that as the singer gains weight, the body deposits its fat where cells are thin, in this case the chest.

The *Star* notes that Rogers was at first embarrassed by his budding breasts, but felt better about them, reportedly, after wife Marianne said he looked quite good that way. But don't expect Rogers to outshine Dolly Parton. He is now watching his calorie intake carefully.



While we do know of Roger's initial reaction to his growing breasts, there was no reaction from another well-known male figure who was discovered in a Florida store wearing a purple tank top, a polka dot skirt, lace apron and yellow lace-trimmed panties. Ken, frequent companion to Barbie, wasn't talking, and a spokesperson for Mattel, Inc. would only say that it was just one of those things.

The doll, still packaged in its factory wrappings, was found by a 12-year-old girl browsing in a Tampa toy store.

A few weeks later, Hollywood producers Gene Kirkwood and John Hyde said they were trying to put together a deal with Warner Bros. and Mattel for a live-action Barbie-Ken movie. Hyde says that the story will be contemporary. We can see it now: relationship troubles between Ken and Barbie after Ken tells Oprah that he is a transvestite.



If Warner Bros. doesn't go for the crossdressed Ken plot, CBS might. New York actor and playwright Charles Busch, whose *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* played off-Broadway for five years with a cast in drag, said that he has been commissioned by the television network to write a sitcom pilot.

"I had always had this fantasy of being a zany lady on TV," he said, explaining the plot for the pilot. But I sort of gave it up, thinking, 'Oh there's no way the networks will be able to separate sexuality from female impersonation.'" Someone at the network had heard of Busch's fantasy and asked him to produce a script. There were still more surprises for Busch. "I was thinking they'd want my character to be an older woman so we wouldn't have to deal with her romantic life. But Jeff Sagansky, the head of programming, said to me, 'Gee, I thought she'd have a sort of Mae West quality.'"

Busch admits that the project can be derailed at any point after he produces the pilot script that CBS has contracted for, so don't program your VCRs just yet.



If CBS picks up Busch's option, he will join other television crossdressers like Terry Sweeney who regularly impersonated Nancy Reagan on "Saturday Night Live."

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NewsQueen...

Sweeney is off the show, but is still wearing Adolpho knock-offs. His one-person show, "It's Still My Turn: An Unauthorized Collection of Nancy Reagan's Private Poetry," has begun a run at the off-Broadway Actors Playhouse in the Big Apple. For reservations call (212) 564-8038.



Public accommodations just aren't what they used to be. Consider this story from Houston. Denise Wells and another woman were fined \$200 for using the men's room at a concert because the line to use the women's rest room was unbearably long. Now, the famous "bathroom question" that once graced these pages, has become the hottest topic for discussion on Houston call-in radio shows. Most everyone, male and female, is on her side.

Wells says she will fight the fine in court. So far more than 60 women have called her attorney willing to testify that they, too, have been

compelled to relieve themselves in facilities intended for men. So far, no men have called with similar experiences.



Some accommodations remain separate, like prisons. From California comes news about the only person known to have served time in a Golden State correctional facility as both a man and as a woman.

Elisabeth Kingsley, 35, recently appeared in San Diego Superior Court to work out a plan to repay the people whom she defrauded following her sex change. She had pleaded guilty to several fraud counts that involved bilking people out of nearly \$20,000. Her attorney said that many of the victims were Kingsley's "live-in lovers," and an exact accounting of the money owed could not be determined because they commingled their finances.

Kingsley, who as Robert Villa served time in prison on a grand theft conviction years ago, said she was innocent of the 1988 fraud

charges, but that she had been pressured into accepting a plea bargain. She was ordered to repay \$9,996.



Kingsley is lucky that she was only prosecuted on state charges. If she had used a device advertised in a recent *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, she could have faced federal wire fraud charges.

The ad in the magazine for wannabe mercenaries touts a West German device that uses digital technology "that lets you change the pitch, tone and timbre of your voice. Men can become women; women can become men!" And it only costs \$275.

Our thanks to Rhonda Smith of Sharon, Mass., for bringing this to our attention. Our copy of *SOF* was lost in the mail; we garroted the postman so it never happens again.

The Massachusetts girls got the message; not only did Rhonda send a clipping last month, so did Joan Hoff of Andover. If you see an item relating to crossdressing, send it and the name and date of publication to Miss Sinclair at The Renaissance News.



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CHAPTER ELECTIONS

It's already time to start thinking ahead to 1991 and next year's Chapter leadership. We will be soliciting nominations for the Chapter Board positions in October's National newsletter. The Board positions are: Managing Director; Secretary; Treasurer; Membership Director; and Director of Outreach.

Nominations and voting rights are only open to full, dues-paying Chapter members. If you want to become active in Chapter affairs through a Board position, or would like to nominate someone other than yourself, keep the upcoming nominations in mind. Elections are held at the November general meeting and members must be present in order to vote.

DANCE PARTY SET FOR SEPT. 22

The Chapter resumes it's successful dance party program on September 22 with a night at The New Prelude disco in beautiful New Hope PA. The fun gets underway at 7 PM and runs until 10 PM and afterwards. We will provide a munchies table for our insatiable members.

The New Prelude is located at the junction of Rtes. 202 and 179, 1 mile west of New Hope Center and the Delaware River. There is a \$5 cover to meet the Chapter's expenses.

We have had a lot of fun with our previous parties and we're looking forward to a new round in the cooler Autumn weather. Call the Chapter phone for further info: 215/946-TVTS.

I.F.G.E. CONVENTION PLANNING

Our Chapter is the host for the 1993 IFGE Convention to be held in Philadelphia. If 1993 seems like a long way away, you've probably never planned a national convention.

If anyone is interested in volunteering their services in carrying out the Chapter's responsibilities as host for this event, please talk to any of the Chapter Board members. Getting involved in the planning stages for this convention could turn out to be an educational and interesting experience. Please give it some thought.

Lower Susquehanna News

Lower Susquehanna Valley Chapter of The Renaissance Education Association, Inc.

Volume 2, No. 7 - Elsa Larson, Editor, P O Box 7412, York PA 17404 - September 1990

Chapter Meetings

LSV meets the first Saturday of each month at Classic Designs Hair Care Center, 250 S 15th St, Camp Hill.

Doors open 9:00 p.m. Program 10:00.

Directions: I-83 to Exit 22-Lemoyne, right at light onto Third St. (from I-83 N, you can only turn right), at second traffic light on Third St., turn left on Market St. (Hardees), bear left onto State St (Hess gas) and go about a mile to Classic Designs, on the right just past the West Shore Plaza and a NAPA auto parts store. Use the parking lot on the west end of the building. Enter door facing the parking lot.

LSV Phone: (717) 767-4095

Our answering machine has a special message segment with late-breaking news and events that can be accessed from a tone phone. To talk to a human being, please leave a name and phone number or call back most evenings or weekends.

Harrisburg callers may call Brenda on weeknight evenings at (717) 766-8527 for chapter information and carpools to King of Prussia meetings.

Call Heather at (717) 249-5841 for meeting and events information.

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Chapter News

August 4, the LSV meeting was doubly graced by royalty. In addition to Michelle Lynn, the Pocono Princess, who has become a fixture at LSV (and has finally joined the chapter), we were honored by a visit from Paula Sinclair, the *News Queen*. Paula has been known to be picky and true to form, when asked how she liked our meeting, she pointed out that the grapes had not been peeled. Other than that, we think she had a nice time.

Valley Gossip

Congratulations to **Berni Ehrhart**, of GUSH (Give US Hope) and Altland's Ranch for being named the Daily Point of Light for August 4.

Kathy Stevens visited the K O P meeting on August 18 and reports that My Choice now meets on the second Saturday of each month and has a new meeting location. SASE to: My Choice, 7 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231.

Rose Parsons of LSV wants to know, "If size 22T means 22-Tall, why doesn't 22W mean 22-Wide?"

Outreach Opportunities

LSV will speak to Gay & Lesbian Switchboard of Harrisburg in October. They would also like to have transgendered persons available one evening per month to talk to callers.

We are writing to about 20 local colleges and universities to offer speakers for Human Sexuality courses.

If you are available for outreach, be sure to let us know. If we have sufficient interest, Paula Sinclair, Renaissance National Co-Director of Outreach can provide a speakers training session.

Susquehanna Calendar

- Saturday September 1, LSV meeting.
- Sunday September 9, LSV speaks to Dignity/Central PA at Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Sts, Harrisburg. Mass at 5:00 p.m., Potluck dinner at 6:00, Program starts 7:00.
- Friday September 14 8:00 p.m. *Longtime Companion* at Queensgate Cinema, York. \$10 benefits GUSH. Tickets available at GUSH office or Altland's Ranch. Preceded by 7:00 p.m. champagne reception at Gardner Jewelers. Phone (717) 848-AIDS.
- Friday, September 21, Beulah Lamont & Friends at Altland's Ranch. \$5 cover.
- Sunday-Monday, September 23 & 24, Miss Universe At Large pageant at The Hippo for FIs over 200 pounds.
- Friday, September 28, Stephanie Michaels at Altland's Ranch. \$5 cover.

LSV vs. Sheraton West

We still don't know why we were treated so badly by the Sheraton Harrisburg West. From a sales pitch offering a beautiful room for the Luau and lots of guest rooms, they kept reducing their offer until July 8 when their bartender crudely ejected us from Celebrations Lounge telling us, "We don't want your kind in here." The manager later confirmed that policy. We wonder who else they do not want. We're going to oblige them. Will you?

Thanks, Sheraton East,

for rescuing the Luau with all of the courtesy and hospitality that we expected from a Sheraton Inn. More next month about the Luau and plans for Mardi Gras in Sheraton East's Bourbon Street Lounge. Next year, we'd like the Luau to be a weekend event.

Transsexual in prison takes TS support groups to task

From my own personal experience I can say that transsexual organizations and so-called transsexual "support" groups on the streets are not at all concerned about their transsexual sisters in prison, lip service aside. It appears these "support" groups aren't supporting anyone but themselves, their egos and their treasuries. They are theatrical drag queens, as opposed to being down-to-earth women.

While these support groups are holding gala conventions, luncheons dinners and fund raisers at extravagant plazas, events you must pay to attend, traveling in airplanes, a transsexual sister may be lying naked on a cold concrete floor in a strip cell of some prison's psychiatric wing without a blanket, because, in a flash of desperation at repeatedly being denied female hormone treatment, she became suicidal. Or she may be lying in a prison hospital with a stitched scrotum after trying to castrate herself. While the support groups are stuffing themselves at their banquets in celebration of their "achievements," a transsexual sister in prison is stuffing herself with fat-rich, junk food in order to be overweight so that she may maintain some semblance of breasts. That's how the minds of some people work; desperate people. But for the support groups, the world of transgender is all a tossed salad.

There is much literature on the market put out by "support" groups. None, however, offer anything of significance to transsexual prisoners who are the minority in the transsexual community and the most poor. I doubt if the treasuries of the "support" groups would suffer a dent if they made some basic literature and assistance available free to transsexual prisoners. For example, literature having to do with female hormones, literature of and towards medical litigation (hormone treatment in our case), AIDS informational literature and assistance in obtaining hormone therapy in prison or litigation towards that objective. These transsexual organizations must acknowledge to themselves and in their literature that there are transsexuals in prison, that we are undergoing more degrading treatment than any caste of inmates because of our transgender orientation, and that we need your help. Then they should "come together" and develop a program for the purpose of addressing the reality of the transsexual in prison; those of us who want and need help that otherwise is unavailable. Many of us are determined enough but lack resources, information and support. This can lead to much frustration, strip cells and hospital beds.

I wag an accusing finger at all of you theatrical drag queens who

think transsexualism is all about wearing dresses and high heels and having a party. Transsexualism is a deeply serious matter. I would advise you not to call yourselves a "support" group of the transsexual community unless you are in fact going to support the transsexual community and not your own selfish individual interests. We, who have-not, know the pain of being a woman. We know the oppression of being put down and denied, the depression of being ignored. We know the taste of the death wish. The power that has made us what we are is the witness. We speak truth and our voices will remain no matter how many veils you wear or how loud the music; no matter how many crumbs you let fall from your banquet tables.

I know well of what I speak. I am the woman who slept on that concrete floor and lay in that hospital bed. I am the one who has written to "support" groups and received their well-printed propaganda. I am the one who asked them for help and never heard from them again. You, who claim yourselves women, out there in the free world would learn well from your sisters in prison. We are accountable, yes, but so are you.

Lofofora Contreras
C45887 A210L
Box 29
Represa, CA 95671

Commentary on transsexuals in prison...JoAnn Roberts

Ms. Contreras is one angry woman. I cannot think of a more hopeless position for a transsexual person to be in. She is being denied support not only from within the prison system but also from outside. No wonder she is angry.

Some will read her letter and think she deserves her plight otherwise she wouldn't be in prison to begin with. But we who are not transsexual have no idea to what levels of desperation she might have succumbed nor what crime she

committed to reach her goal of sex reassignment.

It is relatively easy when you are white and moderately educated to get through transition, but a minority sister has a different path to travel. There is a good reason why many TV and TS prostitutes on the streets are minorities; they don't have the education nor the access to the information, resources and opportunities we do. Many of them dropped out of high school because they could no longer stand to be

beaten up day after day because the other kids thought them "fags."

There is much that could be done to save these sisters from a life on the streets and in prison, but that's a subject for another article. For now, let me say that Renaissance has a Prison Project in place. We have been sending our newsletter and other information for free to those who ask for it. The Prison Project costs us money. If you would like to sponsor a prisoner's newsletter send \$6 to the main office.

Burn Your Bra!

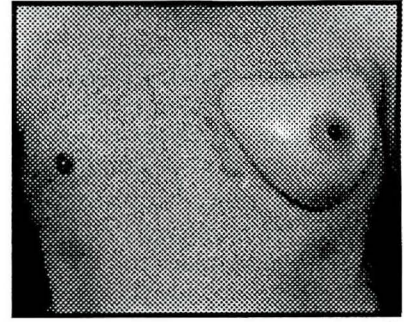
We're not making fun of the feminists, but they do have a point about the restrictions of wearing a bra. Now, you can throw away your bra, if you like, because you won't need it with our new *Illusion* breastforms.

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Toronto SOS helps TVs & TSs get off streets

Toronto, Ontario is often touted as a progressive city; one with a bright future. Like any large city, it has its dark side: drugs, robbery and prostitution. Now, a social service agency, Street Outreach Services (SOS), is trying to alleviate part of the prostitution problem.

SOS works with young men and women who have chosen a career of prostitution. A large number of the young men they encounter are transvestites or transsexuals. SOS tries to educate these people about the medical, legal and social implications of their chosen lifestyle in the hope that the young person will voluntarily choose to leave it.

The program conducted by SOS works in three phases. The first phase is streetwork. Four streetworkers in teams of two cover the major downtown area prostitution "tracks." They work Monday to Saturday until 1:00 am. Their goal is to make contact and establish a rapport with the prostitutes.

The second phase is drop-in support. SOS maintains an office in the area where street youth may stop by, day or night. A wide range of resources are made available on a voluntary basis. These range from informal conversation, to counselling, to AIDS information, and even to a needle exchange program operated by the city.

The third phase is called High-Support, a comprehensive program of counselling and support for finding education, training programs, new jobs and housing. For those in High-Support, there is a co-op boarding house available. It is not a group home and has no treatment facilities. It is simply a safe place to stay.

SOS has formed a peer support group for their TV/TS clients called "Transsexuals, Lovers, Friends and Family." They are asking for literature, input or advice from transgen-

AAAS policy was ahead of the times

The June-July issue of *Rainbow*, the newsletter of the Rainbow Gender Association (San Jose, Calif.) carried this resolution from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

"WHEREAS some American Scientists are members of sexual minorities (Homosexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals, etc.) and

"WHEREAS these persons may be valued members of their professions capable of making great contributions to the progress of science and to the National Welfare, and

"WHEREAS there still exist many forms of discrimination against these scientists because of their sexual orientation without regard to their professional qualifications and

"WHEREAS such discrimination constitutes a loss to science and an injustice to these individuals

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Association for the Advancement of Science deplors any form of discrimination on the basis of sexual behavior between consenting adults in private, and

"BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Board of Directors be directed to charge its Committee on Opportunities in Science to take due cognizance of this resolution in its work."

This profound resolution was passed by AAAS in March 1975 and is an excellent model for other organizations to adopt as a policy against discrimination on the basis of sexual behavior.

der support groups to assist them in supporting their clients.

Send your newsletter, literature or other contributions to SOS, 7 St. Nicholas St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1W5

F-t-M book review...from page 1

California and resumed her work. By now she was unable to move about with ease as she was well known and a law had been passed in 1903 prohibiting the wearing of apparel of the opposite sex. She changed her name to Jack Bee Garland and lived as a man until her death in 1936.

Female To Male (Alyson Publications, \$8.95) falls short of really telling much about the life of Babe Bean. The author, Louis Sullivan, has relied heavily on newspaper accounts of the life of Babe Bean and this source for facts is very questionable. *Female To Male* is a rather fragmented look at a person's life and leaves many questions unanswered about the real life of Babe Bean.

Reviewed by Daniel M.T. Graham

"Would you date a woman with a dick?"

"I dunno. It'd depend on her personality."

Al Pacino
Sea of Love

Sunday socials rescheduled

After a brief hiatus, the Sunday Social group will meet again this month on Sunday, Sept. 9 at 3:00 PM. The group now plans to hold its gatherings every second Sunday of the month at The Woods complex, the site of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter meetings.

The primary purpose of the social is to provide an opportunity for members and their partners to meet and socialize in a non-crossdressing atmosphere. Transsexuals in committed relationships are also invited to attend the socials.

Anyone interested in attending the next social should contact JoAnn or Betty Roberts at (215) 640-9449.

From around the TV/TS community NATIONAL GENDER NEWS™

GREELEY, COLO. — Attention K-Mart shoppers...

Our own *Survival* columnist **JoAnn Altman Stringer** was caught in the glare of K-Mart's Blue Light recently. Stringer, like many starving artistes, photogs and writers, works part time at K-Mart to help make ends meet.

The blue noses at K-Mart have a "dress code" that forbids women from wearing tops or dresses with spaghetti straps and also specifies they are not to bare their midriff.

During the recent warm weather Stringer wore a tank top and skirt to work. While the tank top did not have the "illegal" straps, the local management deemed the style unacceptable. (Stringer told us she often goes bra-less but not on this particular day.)

After a three hour conference, management issued a new dress code adding tank tops to the proscribed apparel list. Stringer was not reprimanded since she had not broken the specific regulation on spaghetti straps.

Oh yes. The new dress code for women was decided by all men — no female management input.

Gee JoAnn, how about a gorilla suit? They didn't add that to the list.

NGN

WESTMINSTER, MD. — At least one person we know is very upset with **Lola and Venus Productions.**

Our friend sent \$33 to Venus for a copy of their video tape *Perfecting Femininity* over three months ago. After many letters of inquiry the tape finally materialized. Imagine our friend's chagrin when the tape turned out to be 15 minutes long.

One other person who has seen the tape commented that it wasn't worth the money. *Caveat emptor!*

NGN

WOODLAND HILLS, CALIF. — We have control of your TV...

Many sisters are avid science fiction readers and, of course, sci-fi sometimes allows us the fantasy of a sex change.

Ricky Hunt (a.k.a. The Bearded Lady) writing in the July issue of *Cross-Talk* (The Valley Girls) mentions one such novel, *I Will Fear No Evil* by **Robert Heinlein**. Hunt loved the story about the rich, old industrialist that has his brain transplanted into the the body of a young woman. Sounds like mind

rape to us.

Hunt says, "Even if you have not read SF before, any TV or TS will be interested in this book."

Oh, Ricky! Couldn't you find a better book to recommend? Much of Heinlein's work after *Stranger In A Strange Land* is simply garbage and we've read *everything* he wrote. Ol' Bob has trouble with his female characterizations; they're unrealistic and unbelievable. His early works are the best, but none have a transgender theme.

If you have a hankerin' to try a sci-fi sex-switch try reading anything by **Jack Chalker**, in particular *The Identity Matrix*.

Our all time favorite sci-fi author with a unique flair for multiple sex switches is **John Varley**. His female characters are so believable that we once believed Varley was the pen name of a real female. Look for his *Ophiuchi Hotline* and *Persistence of Vision*. We believe you'll be highly entertained.

NGN

SEATTLE, WASH. — We noted this next item in the *Emerald City News*. Theater Rhinoceros (we don't know, so don't ask) is staging a play en-

continued next page



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From around the TV/TS community
NATIONAL GENDER NEWS™

titled *Hidden: A Gender*, a witty and clever piece about gender roles that asks the question, "Why can't we count higher than two?"

The play was written by **Kate Bornstein**, one of the original members of the Renaissance board of directors and a post-op transsexual. Bornstein plays both the male and female roles in the semi-autobiographical work.

We are pleased to hear Kate is doing well and send our regards,

NGN

LOS ANGELES — We found a most interesting tidbit in the *Chic Diary* (C.H.I.C.) for July. Editor **Elana Benson** found an interesting article in the journal of the *American Psychological Association* titled *The Concept of Autogynephilia and the Topology of Male Gender Dysphoria*.

Translated into plain English the hypothesis of the paper is that gender dysphoric men (i.e. male to female transsexuals) who are not sexually aroused by men are instead sexually aroused by the thought or image of themselves as women. Two hundred twelve adult male to female transsexuals were tested and the results showed the hypothesis to be true.

One may deduce that the transsexuals not sexually aroused by men, therefore, are nothing more than a variant of your garden variety transvestite. Hmmmm... Could be a link here with Richard Docter's secondary transsexuals. We wonder what he thinks about this.

NGN

PHILADELPHIA — We mentioned here earlier about *People Exchanging Power* (PEP), a support group for those into the B&D/S&M scene. Well, we've heard from PEP Domina Maxima, **Nancy Ava Miller**, that PEP-PA is now in operation. They have at least two activities scheduled every week. (Must be a lot of people into this scene to support this level of activity.) And,

Miller says, transvestites and transsexuals are encouraged to attend. There is a door charge for males at all parties and seminars.

For more details about PEP-PA write Nancy Ava Miller, 3400 Red Lion Rd., #12-C, Phila., PA 19114, or call (215) 440-6469.

NGN

MINNEAPOLIS — Way back when (we don't recall the exact date), we mentioned that the **City of Lakes Crossdressers Club** wanted to change its name. They have and they're also holding a membership vote on a new logo.

The group is now called the **City of Lakes Crossgender Community**. Cute. The letters stay the same: CLCC.

Anyone in the Twin Cities area looking for a good support group should contact CLCC at P. O. Box 16265, Minneapolis, MN 55416

NGN

SAN FRANCISCO — Our sister organization here is still growing in leaps and bounds. The **Educational TV Channel** (ETVC) reports a roster of 430 members at last count.

Newly elected president, **Martina**, writes in their July-August newsletter that she has a dream and a nightmare. The dream is to have 25 per-cent of the members actively participating on a committee or in a function. Her nightmare? In 5 years ETVC will have paid executives and \$100 membership fees.

This issue also contains some good information about driver licensing. In California, as in most states including Pennsylvania, it is illegal to hold two driver's licenses. Thus, you may not apply for a second license in your femme name without giving up the one in your male name.

In Pennsylvania and some other states, the state offers a non-driver I.D. card. It is also illegal to apply for this I.D. if you already hold a valid driver's license.

Transgendered people in Pennsylvania can take comfort, however, in the knowledge that their driver's license does **not** have a sex designation on it. California, on the other hand, does.

...and they think we're behind the times on the East Coast.

NGN

ST. PAUL, MINN. — We should feature a Profiles In Courage occasionally. Here's the first candidate.

Mikki from *Minnesota Freedom of Gender Expression* (MFGE) was planning a quiet evening out on the town but got more than she bargained for. First, she settled in at a local club to watch an impersonator show, but left when a drunk started pestering her for drink money.

She got into her car in an adjacent parking lot when another car pulled up and two men proceeded to drag a third, apparently unconscious, man onto the pavement. The two men disappeared into the club.

Mikki, not knowing if the man was dead or alive, decided to act. She called the police, gave the license number of the car, her location and told the dispatcher she was dressed as a woman.

By the time the police arrived, the car had gone, but the man was still there. Mikki had reparked her car so that her headlights were shining on the body. The first police officer on the scene advised her to stay back and she did.

When asked for her name for the police report, she gave her full, correct male name. The officer paused, stared at our brave gal, shook his head and said, "Naaa!" Mikki replied, "Yes." To which he replied, "Well, to each his own." Meanwhile an ambulance came and took the unconscious man to a hospital.

Mikki did the right thing. Her choice to risk discovery and ridicule may have saved a life. How many others would have done the same?

It's true: Silence=Death

The **BACKPAGE**

MOVIE REVIEW

I don't know whether or not you've seen the movie on CINEMAX cable called *Cleo/Leo*.

The story line, if you can call it that, revolves around a business tycoon who is a notorious womanizer. He believes women were put on the face of the earth for his sexual pleasure only and is extremely chauvinistic. However, due to a mysterious accident he drowns and is reborn into a woman's body but with the same male soul. At least it seems that way at first.

It's comical to see this woman smoking cigars and sitting with her legs apart not realizing that she is in fact a woman. Slowly the female persona emerges from within her soul and finally takes over. We see the transformation from what is a very masculine, raunchy woman

into a beautiful lady. The flic totters on the edge of being sexually explicit as there are a number of bare breast shots but it's not a porn film.

The transition Cleo goes through is very much what a transsexual might go through, which is the interesting part, though it is graphically overdone. For those of us who have gone through transition to SRS, and have experienced male/female relations it is easy to put ourselves into her shoes once again.

Viewers should concentrate on the gender confusion aspects of *Cleo/Leo* and forget about the storyline. There is more plot to a Roadrunner cartoon. As movies go it's officially rated at two stars. Personally, I give it one and a half for content, but for the interest of gender confusion I give it a solid three stars for impact. I doubt it will be in

video stores as it was done for cable in 1989. Interesting movie for the gender set of any age, but as far as movies go, I put it right above Attack of the Killer Tomatoes.

SPECIAL PROJECT

We frequently receive mail from transvestites and transsexuals in prison. Renaissance has established a Prison Project to provide inmates with free copies of our newsletter. Since the newsletter isn't printed for free, we have to subsidize the program and the response is steadily growing.

We need subscription sponsors for the Prison Project. For every \$6 donated, we can provide a one-year subscription to an inmate. Confidentiality is maintained; inmates do not know who the sponsors are.

Please help your sisters.

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