

The Sweetheart Connection

A publication of the Society for the Second Self, Inc. 8880 Bellaire, B-2 #104, Houston, TX 77036

Fall, 1998

Volume 6, Issue 4

**CDs come
out of the
closet, Wives
run IN...**

Bev R. p4

**Holiday
at
Sea**

**November,
1998**

Contact

melpeg@phoenix.net
for dates and
information

S.P.I.C.E.

VII

July, 1999

Minneapolis, MN

**A Wilderness
Adventure**

The Questions We Ask...

Alan Lanning, a psychologist at a Chicago area college, specializes in human sexuality and frequently attends and speaks to the Chicago Tri-Ess group. He recently wrote CDSO and your editor asking: "Could you tell me what are those hard to ask questions (of wives?)" Bev wrote "When our husbands come out of the closet, we go in. Our little forum has been a place to DISCUSS those things that enrage us, hurt us, confuse us, and, yes, even 'charm' us." Mr. Lanning then asked, "What do you mean when you say you go into a closet? (See Bev's article on page.4) What are the little things that enrage, hurt, confuse and charm you?"

Dear Mr. Lanning,

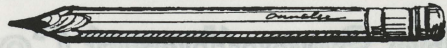
After the predictable first questions most women ask about CDing, i.e. "Are you Gay?" "Do you want to BE a woman (TS?)" will quickly come "Is it MY fault?" "What do want from me?" and the ever recurring "How come you didn't tell me before now?" This is the "betrayal" issue. On CDSO, things have improved considerably in terms of what the women address. There are "leaders" who are considered to

be very accepting women... it is amazing and oddly comforting to learn how even those women will sometimes find themselves suddenly thrown off balance by some unusual behavior of their husbands. Mostly we are all trying to come to grips with the impact CDing has on daily life. Frequently what we are actually looking at are other issues for which CDing is made the scapegoat. Sorting the issues from one another can get tricky, especially by e-mail. And yet, the e-mail is exactly the disinterested path that best allows dispassionate analysis to enable workable solutions. How hard a question is to ask will vary from person to person. That about which one woman/couple choke up against and cannot speak, for another is common conversational coin. One encouragement has been "If you cannot ask, you cannot be answered. If you WILL NOT ask, you already have your answer." We regularly remind people that "secrets" are the first degree of separation, paraphrasing Freud. The hard to ask questions *generally* tend to orbit around sex. Or the lack of it. Which gets, under-

standably, confused with love. Older women tend to blame themselves. Women with shaky self-esteem will either quietly lie down and suffer, wondering why they do so, while others go on a destructive rampage of rage. The continuing thread perceived through all these years and situations is an attempt to fix blame for the whole phenomenon SOMEWHERE, if not on someONE: "How come HIS needs carry more urgency than mine? What makes him think I should welcome sex with him dressed as a woman? He doesn't like the ghost of an idea of him being perceived as gay, how come it's OK for me to seem a lesbian when with "her"? Are our kids going to turn out this way, too? I don't dress like a hooker, how come he does? Is that what he really thinks women are like? What makes him think that getting the "right" hair, make-up, fingernails clothes and shoes will enable him to "pass?" How come "passing" as a woman is so overpoweringly important to him? Doesn't he like being a MAN at ALL? Am I not enough of a woman for him? Why is it so hard for him to understand that I want a MAN for a husband, NOT a "girlfriend?" How do I get through to him that

(Continued on page 5)

Editor's Blue Pencil



An advertisement seen in the August 24 & 31 double issue of the New Yorker got me thinking about perceptions and expectations. The ad depicted a full length frontal view of a black man in most elegant and classic male attire... closely cropped hair, tailored suit, shirt, tie, clocked socks, brogue shoes and walking stick... with an overprint statement: "I'm comfortable being a MAN." So?

The model is attributed to be RuPaul, drag superstar. This conjured conversations and discussions held and overheard at several S.P.I.C.E.'s that focused on the concept of "Integration". So pivotal is this idea to many women (who basically 'accept' crossdressing in their relationships) that the S.P.I.C.E. planning board asked Richard [a.k.a. Rachel] Miller to make presentations to S.P.I.C.E. attendees two years running. The way Richard, and his wife, Marsha, present it, integration comes down to his being just as comfortable appearing in either male or female dress. He enjoys being Rachel with the particular joy and pleasure that can be found only there. He also finds as much, if somewhat different, pleasure in presenting himself as Richard and is as careful in that presentation as he is with Rachel's. He states that his relationship with Marsha is of prime importance to him, which Marsha reciprocates.

The couple talked, worked and sought ways to bring Rachel harmoniously into their lives together. Richard happily scales Rachel's appearances to the appropriateness of the occasion and to the expressed needs and desires of his wife. This has enabled Richard to not only integrate Rachel into his persona, but Marsha to integrate Rachel into their

marriage equally as well.

A pivotal word in those previous sentences is "expressed". Richard inquires of Marsha and Marsha responds. There is no "romantic" expectation of the other just "knowing" what the spouse wants. There is no expectation the spouse will naturally perceive the other's needs or desires. No "mind reading" is required or desired. It would seem some number of women have come to expect "mind reading" as the normal if not preferred, mode of living. "If you really loved me, you would just KNOW what I wanted." Or -worse- "If you don't know, I'm certainly not going to tell you!" Hollywood has, for decades, catered to this unrealistic ideal. We have been reared by parents who seemed to know what was in our minds. Indeed, until language and reason are established, many parents do successfully "read" their children. What, as children, we failed to realize is that our parents were experienced in reading our behavior, extrapolating from that what our needs and wants might really be. (Which is why some of us learned early how to be "sneaky", hmm?) Later, it seemed as though school teachers also had this "knack". Some ill-advised teachers would promote that notion as a truth. E-gad and gazooks! Mind Reading must be required in order to live successfully.

Little girls, whose brains are allegedly wired for such perceptive capabilities, begin early the astute study of their surroundings, noting microscopic details. Little boys are busy just being little boys. Then there are those little boys who "catch on" and study on this "feminine" capacity at a young age. Even go so far as to clothe themselves in the apparel of those

they would - and, to some degree, can - emulate. (This in no way should be read as causation for crossdressing, merely concomitant.) But we become used to "mind reading" as the way of interpersonal relationships and are disappointed, even discomfited, when it is not perceived as readily forthcoming. Then we complicate the dilemma by piling on expectations of what our chosen mate will be to and for us, neglecting what they really are in favor of some ideal we carry in our mind of what we believe we want.

We do it to ourselves, too. In extreme cases, such unrealistic expectations are clinically termed "schizoid". The "quid pro quo" is, of course, acceptance. Acceptance of the self and of the spouse. If that spouse is a crossdresser, his condition is as ineluctable to his needs as is the need for air to breathe. The perception of the integration of a femme persona into a male spouse pushed to an expectation of its accomplishment is nigh on impossible if acceptance is lacking.

How does one come to such a level of acceptance? One begins with one's self. It is difficult to give to others that which one does not have for one's self. Which is the prime reason Tri-Ess, it's chapters and S.P.I.C.E. exist; to provide the understanding and the tools whereby the wives, partners and family members each can find their own levels of self acceptance and from there, for their loved crossdresser. As this year fades, let each of you who can, make a pledge to invest in your own future health and happiness. Find your own ineluctable rock of acceptance upon which to build your castle of integration.

The Double Message Game

by Jackie

This is the third of four excerpts from Richard Doctor's 1988 book "Transvestites and Transexuals" as offered by "Jackie"

In this game, transvestism is out in the open but the partners are not honest in their efforts to handle this. They deny their feelings, pretend all is well, communicate falsely in hope that this will help, and generally fail to establish bridges essential to long-term marital satisfaction. Here is some of what we have observed in those relationships.

1. The husband professes that his marriage is the most important thing in the world to him. He says he will do anything to save his marriage and to strengthen it. But he persistently behaves otherwise. He breaks the rules they have agreed upon. He is a law unto himself. He believes that he must have what he wants when he wants it.

2. Like most wives of TVs, this wife would prefer that crossdressing did not exist. However, she has difficulty expressing this directly because it seems very rejecting. Instead, she buries and conceals her feelings and, at first, pretends to be accepting and supportive. She occasionally buys a gift for "the other woman" and assists her husband in crossdressing. Together with verbal approval, these outward signs of acceptance are really a mask for her feeling of contempt, anger, and frustration.

3. The husband incorrectly assumes his wife really enjoys his crossdressing and asks her to become more involved in purchases, club ac-

tivities, and other TV events. The more she does, the more he asks for.

4. The wife continues to mask her feelings but becomes increasingly uncomfortable. She is becoming fed-up. As time passes, there are occasional episodes of anger, tears, and accusations.

5. Neither partner is eager to seek marriage counseling. If they do so there is sufficient ambivalence that little progress is made. For both, it is more comfortable to conceal feelings than to discuss sources of conflict.

6. There is progressive withdrawal from each other and, at a time of unusual stress, the marriage may end.

The Sweetheart Connection is published four times yearly. No boundary trashing. No bashing of any kind.

Our guideline for every issue will be that which shapes productive resolution to many problems:

1. What is going on?
2. Who's in charge?
3. What do you want?
4. Where do we go from here?

Each quarterly issue will deal with all four questions but will focus on one question in turn.

Subscription costs are: \$15 yearly for four issues, or a wife/partner may join Tri-Ess separately from her partner for a cost of \$10. She will receive membership and the Sweetheart Connection. If she chooses to receive The Femme Mirror, her annual cost will be \$25. Letters, comments and articles are encouraged and may be sent to the editor:

*Onnalee Graham
The Sweetheart Connection
P.O. Box 8591
Minneapolis, MN 55408.*

*E-mail: spice@tri-ess.com
Voice mail: (612)870-8536*

A Man Without a Woman

The following are the words to the spontaneous and impromptu song sung by Graham, Leigh, and Graham at the close of S.P.I.C.E. 6 in Atlanta

A man without a woman
Is like a ship without a sail;
Is like a boat
without a rudder,
Is like a kite without a tail,

A man without a woman
Is like a wreck
upon the sand,
But if there's one
thing worse

In this universe,
It's a woman...
(I said a woman)
It's a woman
without a man!

Strange Brew: By John Deering

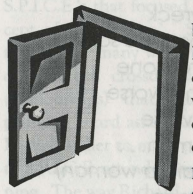


This issue is a bit late AND, for some reason, several articles are missing their "new paragraph" stops. Sorry 'bout that, we figured it was more important to get printed and in the mail to you Editor

My Pretty Closet

by Bev Rencher

I have observed that when these crossdressers to whom we are married finally burst forth from their closets, we, their spouses, seem to run INTO the exact same closet which they have abandoned. I find that in the case of my dear husband who certainly left a mess in there. I don't think he had picked up a thing in 40 years.



First, I bought a lamp so I could see what I was doing while cleaning the place. I was overwhelmed as I began. Piles and piles of discarded clothing, old life scripts, a couple keepsakes from old relationships, stacks of guilt and a big bucket of shame. I gathered up all the old, unwearable clothing, which neither he nor I could wear anymore and burned them all "in memoriam". I read through the old life scripts. They were badly written; things only a twelve year old would want to live by and tossed them onto the fire with the clothing. The keepsakes I packed away neatly and safely. I examined and studied the stacks of guilt piece by piece and determined that none were enhancing either my life or his and might even be causing some harm, if left lying about. I put the whole stack into a cardboard box and dumped it all into the Intercoastal Canal. That felt really good!

That left the bucket of shame,

which proved harder to deal with. No matter how many times I emptied that bucket, there was always some left in the bottom. I put it to one side, hoping it would evaporate on its own. On a trip to the hardware store, I bought some lovely mauve paint, two rolls of designer "border" paper in a Spring Floral print and a crystal door knob. After a couple of days of scrubbing, painting and applying the border, I fitted the crystal door knob. I don't know how that closet door worked with no doorknob at all for so many years.

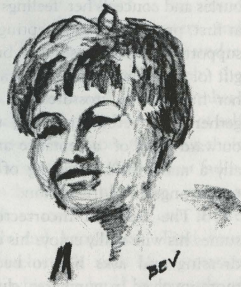
I then made trip to the furniture store where I bought a big, comfy overstuffed chair, a cute little wrought iron table with two matching chairs, a marvelous table cloth that matched the mauve walls and border print, a standing lamp (with two 100 watt bulbs - no dark corners in my closet, please) and a standing bookshelf. I also procured a piece of poster board and some big marking pens.

It was so cozy when I was done, I could hardly settle into my new decorated closet. I had so many plans. Rushing through the closet door, I tripped and fell flat on my face. . it was that lousy bucket of shame. I thought I had moved it far enough out of the way as to. . NOT seem to BE there! Lying there on the floor, with only my dignity hurt, I looked at the thing. A little shame dribbled out of it yet. My closet no longer seemed as bright and happy as I had envisioned it. The mauve paint job suddenly seemed garish, the border print I so loved seemed like a tatter of torn newspaper, the bulbs in the lamp were broken, and there I lay, half in and half out of the closet with the crystal doorknob clutched in my hand. Getting slowly to my feet, I righted that stupid, hated bucket. Yep, just enough shame dribbling

out to spoil everything. I soaked up the remaining shame with an old rag I found lying in the corner, then threw that rag as far out into the Gulf of Mexico as I could possibly fling it. I took the now empty bucket and scoured it clean with bleach and disinfectant, then filled it with seashells. It is now a "center piece" for my little cafe table.

That leaves the poster board and markers to explain. Once I got rid of that last bit of shame, I finished re-decorating my pretty closet. I added a couple of throw rugs and some fresh flowers. I put on some gourmet coffee, warmed some cinnamon buns then wrote on the poster board with the markers: "CDSO - Welcome to my Closet with the Crystal Door-knob", then taped it to the door.

Yes, it is still a closet, but it is now pretty, cozy, warm and attractive. It has books, light and good company. The door stands open most of the time. There are still some stains on the floor from the incident with the shame bucket, but they are slowly fading with time. I feel increasingly free in here. I guess not being ashamed is how we get free. It sure feels that way. May I pour you some coffee? How about a warm cinnamon bun? Welcome to CDSO, my Pretty Closet.



Julie writes...

Remembering

by Julie Freeman

Do you remember what it was like when you first crossdressed? When you made that first call to a hot line? Went to your first meeting? Met another first crossdresser?

Or perhaps you are a significant other. Do you remember when you first found out about your partner's crossdressing? When you made that first call to a hot line? Or perhaps when you called a therapist. What about your first meeting? What about when you first met other significant others or other crossdressers?

Do you remember all your fears, your questions, your concerns?

When we significant others have been members of the community for awhile we tend to forget how difficult it is for first-timers. Sometimes we cannot even remember when crossdressing was not a part of our lives. We have grown accustomed to the ways crossdressing affects our relationships and have made compromises, some more than others. Some of us have become active in gender events, even going on to leadership positions. Others of us have settled into a routine where crossdressing is not major in their lives. Some of us, unfortunately, have found crossdressing too much to bear and have left the community.

For those of us within the community it becomes important to remember what it was like when we were first-timers. There are calls to hotlines almost daily from cross-

dressers or their partners who are experiencing the fears and concerns we have experienced. These newcomers need to be helped, educated, and reassured. They need to learn they are not alone and that there are others out there who have been where they are and understand what they are going through.

For those of us who have become complacent and think everything that can be said and done has been said and done, it becomes a jolt to find that our work is far from done, that no matter how many talk shows there are, no matter how many articles have been written, books published, there still is a huge segment of society that knows little about us and only a few are lucky enough to stumble upon a magazine publishing information about our community.

Even then only a few have the courage to make that phone call and find out there really is help for them.

(Continued from page 1)

wigs, make-up and "boobs" in bed is a TURN OFF for me? Where is the benefit for me; I see no improvement or change in his personality/ attitude/ behavior when he dresses? When do I get off the hook of being "responsible" for his dressing? Who are these people he finds on the Internet? What does he get out of spending hours in electronic stimulation and 'chat-rooms'? How is it he accepts the statements of others over anything "I" say? Is this some kind of conspiracy to erode our family, our marriage, our relationship, to termination? It's OK for him to dress around home, why does he have to go traipsing off to the mall like that? What else is he keeping secret from me? How could he DO this to me?" And even this one... "I don't understand why he had to tell me all this crap in the first place." We are sensible to the concept that the men ask variations of these same questions of themselves. We have been down that rocky road. We still stumble over a few unresolved issues. We contend the key to the closet is self-acceptance. Yes, when the men first venture out of their "closet", they tend to drive their wives INTO a "closet". CDing is clearly not a socially acceptable behavior; when this change is introduced into her marriage, with whom can she discuss it? Certainly not her mother, sisters, cousins, girlfriends or neighbors... these are the very people she does not want to have learn about this "secret." Especially when she is in the "discovery" phase, herself. What is really going on, from our view, is that the men find their own attitudes mirrored in their wives.' After years of avoidance and denial, it is understandable, if not appropriate, that the revelation would create a shift of avoidance and denial from one party to another. The skills of communication AND negotiation are often sadly lacking in most women; S.P.I.C.E. teaches those skills specific to ameliorating a tense CD relationship. Many men merely exchange one 'small' closet for a 'larger' one: the home or the chapter meeting room. It has been a frequent complaint on CDSO, at S.P.I.C.E. and at chapter wives' club meetings, that the men seem non-plussed that their wives "take so long to adjust and accept" CDing. Such "thinking" gets labeled "inappropriate." Announcing a "dawn" does not guarantee a sunny day. We try to shed some light under the clouds.

"But I'm Not a Lesbian!"

One Couple's Solution

by Jane Ellen Fairfax
and Frances Fairfax

Jane:

"No, you may not wear a nightgown to bed!" cried Claire at her husband Johnny. "Silk and lace on you are a big turn-off! When we make love with you in a nightie, I feel like a lesbian. I married a man!"

All too often, in boudoirs around the world, this scene is played out. Johnny has crossed a boundary that is very important to Claire. Perhaps it threatens her self-image as a woman who is attractive to a man: "I must be terribly inadequate as a woman, if he needs to be Joanie in bed. It's almost as if I'm competing with another woman - and losing!" Sometimes crossdressers wonder why their once-tolerant wives become less supportive. How they handle these very real feelings can determine the fate of their relationships.

Incredibly, some crossdressers reply to these fears with insensitive statements attacking their wives' feelings as homophobic! One still sees in the gender community press oc-



casional references to "male lesbians" - which helps not at all. We can pontificate - or we can seek relationship-building solutions. While no solution can be guaranteed for every couple, the following process worked for us.

When I first discovered my desire to crossdress, I spent three weeks at the medical library researching the subject from every possible angle. From the literature I concluded that the term "heterosexual crossdresser" best described me. Taking long walks, I tried imagining Jane's reaction to various encounters. Certainly Jane would like a man to open doors for her, or compliment her appearance. Having a debonair gentleman kiss her hand - why, that would be nice, too. Dancing with a man? Here crept in feelings of discomfort. Making love to a man? - No, thank you. But what exactly was Jane's sexuality? Was she a lesbian? What was I to tell my wife?

Then came the solution! Already I knew that I was just one person. "Jane" was simply the name I gave to the feminine side of my personality. The whole person who is me is a male attracted exclusively to women. Jane lives in my body; Jane's sexuality was mine; the subject was moot! Sharing this insight with my wife helped her to the conclusion that whether dressed as Gil or Jane, I was the same person - the same man - she married. Thus reassured, she was able to express her love for me, regardless of how I dressed for bed. Since the identity is the same, she calls me

"Jane" in private, a loving expression of acceptance that means a lot to me. I, in turn, have reaffirmed her femininity and attractiveness. Mutually secure in each other's love, we have enjoyed freedom to explore the breadth and depth and height of our love. What a life-experience we have built together!

I'm in love with a wonderful woman!

Frances:

And I'm in love with a wonderful man! His qualities of empathy and sensitivity make up a large part of that romantic man I married. Very early in Jane's process of emergence, I told my husband, "You are the same person I fell in love with and married so many years ago. Jane is just a further development - a new facet - of an already fascinating, multi-faceted person." And no matter what he wears to bed, he's still my husband.

My acceptance of Jane was made much easier by several factors. In the first place, Jane began to emerge only after many years of marriage. The crossdressing was never kept hidden from me, and open communication at every stage kept things in perspective. There was little of that unilateral escalation, that "pushing the envelope" which can be so destructive to a relationship. And, as Jane affirmed her femininity, she also reaffirmed mine. She was never my rival. To repeat, I'm in love with a



wonderful man. (And his "sister" is pretty neat, too!)

Too many wives, however, are not so fortunate. I've heard their stories and felt their pain as their husbands, having revealed their crossdressing, proceeded to run amok. Wives were pressed to come to terms immediately with gender issues their husbands had unsuccessfully struggled with for decades. For many wives, the bedroom represents that "final frontier" they dare not allow "her" to cross. To permit "her" in their beds spells the loss of "him." This fear of loss and abandonment is primal. To dismiss it as somehow "homophobic" is the grossest of insults. Besides, if one's sexual preference is innate, how can she be faulted for hers? Is she to be "re-programmed" to find "her" attractive and desirable? Hardly! When a husband has just shaken his marriage to the core by revealing a long-term pattern of deception, and perhaps causing his wife to doubt his sexuality, how can he blithely proceed to call his wife's sexuality into question as well? Only time, patience, and tenderness can bring a wife to tolerate, ignore, or perhaps one day learn to enjoy "her" trappings in bed. An attitude of "I want what I want, and your feelings don't count" is the complete antithesis of the mutual love and respect that should prevail in a loving, committed marriage relationship. Such an attitude rules out communication and compromise. It denies not only her sexual dignity but her human dignity as well.

S.P.I.C.E. 6 Keynote Highlights

by Miriam Cooper

Alan Yorker's opening remarks at the sixth annual S.P.I.C.E. conference will be a hard act to follow next year. In his address, "Love and Marriage with the Gender-gifted Man", he gave a deeply moving introduction to the heartache and pain of the transgendered individual's struggle for acceptance (in both society and self) as well as the struggles of their loved ones to cope with such a perplexing situation. It was an ideal address for the opening of the conference, - a statement of why we were there and what we needed to recognize in our relationships. It spoke to both the newcomers and the returning participants. Many of the attendees could be heard discussing his talk during the remainder of the conference.

Although he is not transgendered himself, Alan came to the conference with a very impressive background as a therapist and educator. A graduate of the prestigious Kinsey Institute, he seemed the perfect professional-clinical and non-judgmental, yet deeply compassionate and concerned for the people he counsels. He set the audience at ease with his open-minded and friendly manner, speaking on this very sensitive subject with a

Perhaps an illustration from a Tau Chi Chapter program of some years ago will help convey some of the instinctive fear and revulsion many wives feel at the notion of their husbands' "dressing" for bed. A local Houston helping professional, a therapist with extensive experience in dealing with sex and gender issues, had been invited to present the evening's program. Chapter members and guests gathered to munch on goodies and await her arrival. One chapter member brought an unexpected guest, a man wearing a 3-piece, western-style suit, boots and a moustache. It took those assembled some time to realize that "Sam" was actually the featured speaker, dressed "en homme." Her true identity revealed, Sharon asked the crossdressed men present to imagine their wives or girlfriends suddenly expressing a lifelong desire to dress in male clothes, complete with cotton boxers, unshaven legs, G.I. haircuts and false moustaches! Stunned silence prevailed as Sharon approached Vicki.

"Pretend I'm your wife, Vicki," Sharon said very sweetly.

"Uh, O.K.," Vicki replied, unconsciously shrinking back.

Purred Sharon, "I'm ready for bed, Dear," putting her arm around Vicki's shoulder.

"I have a headache!" blurted Vicki.

We all had a good laugh. I hope we all got the point. How about it, ya'll?

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(Continued from page 7)

warmth both emphatic and intense.

His closing remarks at the end of the first day were equally excellent. He challenged us all to re-examine our attitudes and preconceptions and make practical use of what we had learned. This is what S.P.I.C.E. is all about.

Some of us who attended SPICE '97 were disappointed that Walter Bockting, one of last years presenters, was unable to join us again this year. We felt that Walter had a special gift for speaking to our hearts that would be difficult - if not impossible - to match. Fortunately we were wrong. Alan was in every way a worthy successor to Walter. Although the two men have different personalities and styles, Alan touched us and taught us in much the same way Walter did. Those of us fortunate enough to have attended Alan's sessions, and spoken to him afterward, will not soon forget his wisdom and sensitivity.

Alan was but one of the very talented and dedicated presenters at SPICE '98. The contributions of such outstanding professionals is one of the great strengths that SPICE has been blessed with each year, and it just keeps getting better.



A Fan Letter...

For almost two years your editor has labored at this job -- reading, thinking, conferring, writing, cajoling, editing, composing, printing, folding, stuffing, labeling, and tussling with the USPS -- and generally having a pretty good time doing the work but always wondering, "Is ANYbody reading this?" With nary a note or word from anyone about the content of this quarterly, it gets nervous making as to whether or not our reader's needs or interests are being served. "No news is good news" seems inadequate. Then, on September 16th, a "fan" letter arrived:

September 12, 1998

Dear Onnalee This morning I had the good sense and the very good fortune to pick up three recent copies of THE SWEET HEART CONNECTION that my dear wife has been reading. I spent two hours parked near our beautiful Lake Michigan utterly captivated by the beautiful thoughts, words and perfect examples of a woman's love. Article after article held within their message love and compassion, which is the grandest expression of love. Each of the treasures I read shone with the true beauty of the real essence of FEMININITY. We CD's have so much to learn from the wives and special others of Tri-Ess. Femininity is not a lace slip, a captivating fragrance, or knowing how to sit and walk. These beautiful women do more than accept their transgendered husband. They do what women have done through all time. they

give of themselves. They love their mate enough to accept that which so few men would accept if the situation were reversed. they not only accept, they integrate THE OTHER WOMAN into their home and their most private moments. Yet they ask for nothing in return except that which her husband promised on their joyous wedding day. So many thoughts rush through my mind, but my putting them on paper would only dilute their meaning. My message to my fellow 'sisters' is simple. She gives so much, yet asks so little in return. Just those words they do not hear often enough." My Darling, I love you so very much. I thank God each day that you are my wife."

Most respectfully,
Victor/Katherine 4864

This gentleman then followed up on the 21st when he wrote giving permission to publish:

... [do] not show it as coming from an individual who prefers to remain anonymous. To do so would take the very life from the message. It was written by some one who cares so much for each wife who has given so much. . . [and] feels that many cross dressers are taking so much from a loving wife, and not giving back as much as they receive. The debt owed to an understanding wife is so great, that it can never be considered 'paid in full'. . . I cannot write that which I would not be willing to say before a thousand members of our transgendered community.

Thank you, Victor. You are a gentleman and, no doubt, a 'lady'.

Editor

Reviewing Books

Book Review by Kathy Cloud
My Husband Wears My Clothes,
Peggy J. Rudd, Ed.D.

A truly remarkable text by a truly remarkable woman. Not only does Dr. Rudd explore the facets of life with and among the inhabitants of the transgendered community, she offers the reader rare insight into the personal and private life of a person who is married to such an individual. Dr. Rudd invites the reader to explore a phenomenon often times shunned, ridiculed and misunderstood by society from the perspective of a wife who has totally accepted her husband's need to express the feminine side of himself. She does not, however, attempt to force the reader to accept crossdressing as a way of life. Rather, she invites the reader to share a fascinating glimpse of the people who dare to be courageous enough to withstand the social and personal pressures brought about by society's ignorance of those whom she calls "gender-gifted". Her exploration of the crossdressing phenomenon covers all aspects of a unique relationship both from a professional and personal point of view. Anyone who has found himself faced with such a relationship can readily relate to the questions posed by the author. And in her easy style, she

explores each issue very matter-of-factly, offering concise answers to questions that plague each spouse and partner of a crossdresser. Most importantly, the reader comes to understand that he is not alone in the world of dealing with the unique problems associated with being in a relationship with a transgendered individual. Dr. Rudd cites a number of avenues available for a spouse or partner to seek advice, counseling, support and help in order to sort out the confusion and fear so many times experienced. The text is factual, down-to-earth and a must-read for anyone currently involved in or considering a relationship with a crossdresser. This is the fundamental exploration of the two sides that each person has and a look at those who choose to express both sides. Rated: 5 Stars



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September 19th, 1998

My wife read "Onnalee's Oddressy" last night and found it very helpful. Onnalee is the first woman she has encountered that seems to share her feelings about crossdressing. Our Tri-Ess chapter loaned us several books when I

came out this past spring so that we both could learn something about crossdressing. (Just because I'm a crossdresser and had been crossdressing since 1950, didn't mean I knew anything about crossdressing.) I could not get my wife to attend S.P.I.C.E. this year. She was afraid that there would be too much negativism and bitching and not enough solutions. She wants to heal her pain and educate herself. She wants to learn to accept me as a crossdresser and crossdressing in general, which she cannot do now. She helped to form our Tri-Ess chapter, but she has difficulty relating well to the other wives. They say to her "So what's the problem? So he dresses like a woman. What's the big deal?" or "I have no problem with him crossdressing, it's lots of fun" It is no fun for her. She is terrified of my second self and afraid of losing her husband. "Onnalee's Oddressy" is excellent for she shows that it isn't all a bed of roses; she didn't embrace crossdressing, but she did stand by her husband. Onnalee is the first woman that my wife has come across who seems to understand how she feels. I think I will be able to get her to attend S.P.I.C.E. next year if only just to meet and talk with Onnalee. My thanks to Onnalee for writing her sensitive story. She shows us all that there is light at the end of the tunnel while validating the feelings of the struggling wife.

Sincerely, A CDing Husband

Let's Talk About - Balance

by Marsha and Richard (Rachel) Miller

At the SPICE conference in Atlanta this summer it was quite natural for cross-dressing to be the primary topic of many discussions. After all it was the common thread that ran through all of us and bound us together. Part of Saturday night's dinner conversation was about the appropriate attire for cross-dressers. Comments were made by several of the wives about the propensity for some of the guys to adopt the "slut-bitch" look. The waiter had just finished serving the salads with a choice of dressings and, unaware of what we were discussing, addressed the table innocently, "Is everyone okay with the dressing." Richard and his new friend Steve were convulsed with laughter and nearly on the floor. We probably were all okay with the salad part of the dressing but there was obviously more work to be done on the crossdressing part.

Even though crossdressing was the core topic, the conference organizers ensured that it was placed into a balanced perspective. The program was augmented by many other topics and events. There was a pre-conference trip to downtown Atlanta for sight-seeing, drinks and dinner. There were breaks for Tai chi exercises and an afternoon of alternative activities. The program included bonding circles for men and for women to get to know and trust each other, a personality inventory to achieve greater self-understanding plus on-going breakout groups to work on topics of special interest. On Sunday morning there was a short religious ceremony to address spiritual needs. All of these events provided a solid counter-balance to the main topic.

When Richard was struggling to place his cross-dressing in perspective in his life he wrote a poem that provided a more comprehensive view of who he is. While technically correct, saying that he is a crossdresser tended to place him into a narrowly defined slot that ignored the many other facets of his character. The poem describes how he loves me and is committed to our marriage. That he values family and friends and is convinced that being a grandfather is the greatest experience of life. That he has strong spiritual beliefs, believes in personal responsibility and is committed to working hard and doing a good job. That he loves children and childlike things, is sensitive, caring and compassionate. That he enjoys gourmet food and fine wines plus beer, pizza and ice cream. That he enjoys humor, works at physical conditioning and enjoys roller blading. That he loves animals, especially cats. That he is discovering a love for theater and the arts, is learning to express his enjoyment of decorating colors, fabrics and textures. That he also enjoys wearing a dress sometimes and wants to be accepted and loved just as he is. That presents a more holistic view.

Having a reasonable balance is important in all things and is especially important to us. Cross-dressing needs to be handled like any other important marital issue. If it becomes the only or primary issue of a relationship, perspective is lost. It is one facet of the relationship, and an important one, but it is still only one. At times different aspects of our lives should receive greater emphasis. At times cross-dressing is center stage, but it cannot remain there permanently without causing damage. It needs to be offset by other things. Serious discussions of the issue need to be intermingled with the multitude of other aspects of everyday life including just plain having fun or our lives can be overwhelmed by cross-dressing. So BALANCE is another principle to

carry along on our journey and to check frequently.

Lest we take even this subject too seriously, Richard wanted to point out that while balance is important there are times when we should allow ourselves some imbalance. It is healthy to offset the difficulties of life and Richard's favorite escape is ice cream. When he was a child his family used to buy vanilla in 2.5 gallon containers and, with various toppings, it was the standard dessert at most meals. With this early training he has gone on to perfect the eating and enjoyment of ice cream. He claims to have performed a scientific survey that proves that ice cream fills in the cracks created by the sharp, irregular edges associated with ordinary foods. Those edges allegedly irritate the lining of the stomach; however, smooth ice cream fills in the rough spots thus causing your stomach to sigh with delight. He further claims to have recorded those sighs but hasn't allowed me to hear the tapes yet. When every day life becomes difficult, he likes to indulge himself in the therapeutic qualities of ice cream. So, when you are facing cross-dressing issues that are difficult to resolve, perhaps an occasional dose of ice cream or your personal favorite escape will actually help to create a better balance in the long run.

Richard's book, *"The Bliss of Becoming One!"* is available from PM Publishers.

The Final Frontier...

Silence

Where No Woman Has Gone Before...

The following Maya Angelou poem is being circulated to celebrate Women's History Month.

Phenomenal Woman

by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips
The stride of my steps
The curl of my lips.

I say It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips
The stride of my steps
The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally Phenomenal
woman
That's me.
I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please
And to a man
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees
Then they swarm around me
A hive of honey bees.

I say It's the fire in my eyes
And the flash of my teeth
The swing of my waist
And the joy in my feet.

I'm a woman Phenomenal
woman
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me
They try so much

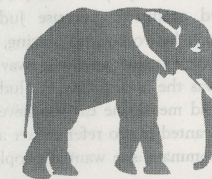
PADERBORN, GERMANY

Overzealous zoo keeper Friedrich Riesfeldt fed his constipated elephant Stefan 22 doses of animal laxative and more than a bushel of berries, figs and prunes before the plugged-up pachyderm finally let fly - and suffocated the keeper under 200 pounds of fecal matter!

Investigators say ill-fated Friedrich, 46, was attempting to give the ailing elephant an olive-oil enema when the relieved beast unloaded on him like a dump truck full of mud.

"The sheer force of the elephant's unexpected defecation knocked Mr. Riesfeldt to the ground, where he struck his head on a rock and lay unconscious as the elephant continued to evacuate his bowels on top of him," said flabbergasted Paderborn police detective Erik Dern. "With no one there to help him, he lay under all that dung for at least an hour before a watchman came along, and during that time he suffocated. It seems to be just one of those freak accidents."

Moral: "Be prepared to handle what you ask for...
You just might get it."



'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally Phenomenal
woman
That's me.

[via Beth on CDSO]

"Public" Conflict...

by Leslie Daniels

I am Leslie Daniels and, I have been married to Paul/Judy for about 20 months. I have a reputation as a very accepting within the community and I love my husband very much. But I'm here to tell you that even the most accepting wives in the world will have trouble with crossdressing sometimes. We have been living apart because of my new job in a different city. Spending weekends together is like dating again. One weekend Judy came down and we set out together to find a church to attend that was gender friendly. Uncertain how the congregation would receive us, we were very nervous. I was trying to convince myself for the sake of my marriage and my husband that I did not care what these people thought of me. We were met with open arms and made to feel very welcome. I noticed every time someone came to greet us, Judy would be "busy" with her purse, leaving me to do the talking. As she has a give-away baritone voice, I figured she was staying silent in order to pass. Stopping for refreshments after the services, I talked with an obviously gay young man and apologized for Judy being unable to speak as her mouth was full of cookie. I then said, "It's really rough when your ROOMMATE IS ON A DIET." (My first impulse had been to say "your wife", but decided against it because Judy seemed to be working on passing; I didn't want to give anything away.) That was the wrong choice. Judy later told me in the car she never again wanted me to refer to her as "my roommate":she wanted people

to know she was married and not think she was gay. The discussion got very heated and I said something I shouldn't have: "Sometimes I feel like that is all I am to you. . . a badge to wear on your chest to confirm you are not gay." Then I also asked, "How come it is okay for others to think I AM gay when it is so important that they think you are not?" I think projection is what really happened. Judy was extremely nervous; she hates admitting to feelings like that, so she focused on what I did wrong instead. She has since told me passing is not an issue for her; I guess I misread her silent lapses. The quirky thing about this is, in the aftermath, I asked Judy how she would like me to refer to her in the future and she said, "As your wife, just as you did in our marriage vows." Yup!! That's what he said! Can you understand my confusion? We were married in matching dresses and wrote our own vows, as Judy was insistent about being taken as a wife. I went along with the fantasy of the moment because it was a special milestone in our lives. Now I'm wondering if I should have fed the fantasy at all! This is the first time the matter has come up since then. The biggest thing that was unresolved for me was that I felt I was corrected unfairly. I was wrestling with my own demons about being out and kept it to myself to spare her feelings. I feel that she didn't afford me the same respect. The fear of being labeled gay is a demon for my husband, to an almost paranoid extent. I understand that communication is the key to most relationship problems. Often, I will decline to open communication on touchy issues such as this until it is too late and I am

angry. The reason is simple: Judy told me when we first met that she hates confrontations and will go away rather than to argue. So I try to avoid all touchy subjects until it's too late. I need to work on that. (Otherwise) it is very crazymaking.

(Leslie brought her problem to the ladies of CDSO for a chance to blow steam on the issue, talk it out and get. . ."validation on the point that Paul/Judy is not my wife. To refer to her as so in public would lessen our chances of being accepted and welcomed in a social setting. I was glad to hear... that I was not out of line.")

After a little more talking with Paul, we have decided that we're not afraid of using our real names (in this story)... out of concern for our feelings, you might be stifled in writing it "the way it was." ... We feel we want to help couples in a real way and this incident was as real as they come.

postscript: We went to church this morning. In the car, we rehearsed what kind of behavior each of us expected from the other and how we wanted to be referred to in conversation. I did most of the talking again. Can you believe that of Judy? I introduced her as Judy with no further explanation required. She seemed happy with the outcome of the morning and we were definitely back in harmony again. Don't you love happy endings?



Leslie